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A Sixth-Grade Literature Discourse Community: Making Social Meaning With Illustrated Literature During Interactive Reading Events.

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Willis, Elizabeth Lee, Ph.D.

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A SIXTH-GRADE LITERATE DISCOURSE COMMUNITY: MAKING SOCIAL MEANING WITH ILLUSTRATED LITERATURE DURING INTERACTIVE READING EVENTS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
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requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by
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ABSTRACT

The study focused on six at-risk students enrolled in the sixth grade at a large urban Southern middle school. These students, along with their classroom teacher, participated in two interactive reading events using illustrated trade books. The purpose of the study was to examine how these students used the pictures and text to create meaning for the stories.

The two illustrated selections differed in story complexity, amount of world knowledge required for interpretation, and relationship of pictures to text (i.e., a close relationship indicated both picture and text communicated similar information, while a distanced relationship indicated one source provided story insights not provided by the other medium). Each of the two reading events was analyzed for content that matched the story, level of abstraction, and facilitating guidance provided by the teacher.

Results showed these six at-risk learners reconstructed the illustrated stories by widely varying their attention to information sources and using their personal knowledge for story interpretation. They revealed limited ability to retrieve world and cultural knowledge as well as limited acknowledgment that

background knowledge could be a source of information for their story development.

CHAPTER I

LANGUAGE AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Introduction

The educational demands imposed by the middle school curriculum require a sophisticated level of language ability for participating in school discourse. Students are expected to coordinate many levels of knowledge as well as classroom rules and procedures. For example, students are presumed to have knowledge of discourse structures in which sentences have multiply-embedded phrases and clauses, and abstract vocabulary. These middle years of sixth, seventh, and eighth grades are critical points in the school curriculum; changes in academic goals and teacher expectations correspond with, and depend upon, increased language demands. Curriculum design and teacher expectations are based upon assumptions about knowledge and language abilities facilitated, internalized, and used through previous personal and academic experiences by these students.

Unfortunately, these assumptions may not be consistent with the actual knowledge and language levels for at-risk students. While nationally, 30.4% of the children leave school before graduating, in Louisiana, 40.5% of all children fail to graduate (Kids Count Data Book, 1992). Of these, over one-third have been

identified as at-risk (Louisiana State Department of Education, 1989). These children exhibit one or more high risk characteristics, such as growing up in poverty, lacking in self esteem, or coming from an abusive or dysfunctional family. In addition, many children identified as at-risk in kindergarten have already been retained in one or more grades by third grade, are experiencing severe learning difficulties, and are beginning to show patterns of high absenteeism. Children who have been labelled at-risk are said to lack the academic and language skills needed to succeed in middle school (Louisiana State Department of Education, 1989).

Given that many at-risk students have not been successful in meeting the expectations of the regular middle school curriculum, the purpose of my current research was to explore the use of alternatives in pedagogical practices, including the use of illustrated storybooks and small group interactions within the context of classroom reading events. Specifically, this study focused on six sixth-grade students' meaning-making of illustrated literature, as well as my mediation of this process as their classroom teacher, with particular attention to the language demands of the reading selections and the actual language used to meet these demands.

Language and the Middle School Curriculum

Facility with a wide range of language skills is needed to successfully participate and learn in a middle-school classroom. The students must be able to shift their language registers and discourse patterns to be appropriate to the situation (Norris, 1991; Norris & Hoffman, in press). The language that is used within a situation depends upon many interacting factors, such as what is being talked about, to whom, and for what purpose. By the middle-school grades, when teachers and students converse, it is usually in academic settings during classroom routines, such as oral lectures or instruction, where little nonverbal support is provided to aid comprehension. In addition, in assigned expository and literary readings, the written text may be lengthy and complex, while the pictures may be minimal and only marginally relevant. Thus, this academic information must be understood, remembered, and organized using language.

Because these language demands imposed upon middle school students escalate in complexity and abstractness with each passing year, it is important to know about these children, their language, and their curriculum. In order to explore these areas, the following sections propose examples of conventional middle school curricula demands as well as assumptions about children's knowledge

and language needed to meet these demands. To begin with, the next section presents an excerpt from a literature selection that reveals the language demands placed on students during literary reading.

Language in a Literature Context

The middle-school curricula are replete with literary works deemed appropriate for this age student. This literature becomes a context of shared meaning, in which the author uses language to create an event that allows interpretation by the listener or reader (Bruce, 1981). In order to accomplish the goal of shared meaning, the author makes certain presuppositions about the knowledge, background, and linguistic competence of the implied reader, and chooses accordingly the type and amount of information to be expressed within a level of vocabulary and discourse structure (Norris, 1991; Norris & Hoffman, in press). Presuppositions concerning whom the text is written for are based on generalizations about age, gender, educational level, experiential level, and culture of the reader (Bruce, 1981; Goodman, Smith, Meredith, & Goodman, 1987). In addition, they include a range of elements of linguistic structure and knowledge that are inherent and interactive in written text, expressing complex relationships of meaning for middle school students (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984).

Literature Example

The illustrated story **The Nightingale** by Hans Christian Anderson is a classic tale included in a sixth grade basal reader (reprinted, 1980). It concerns a Chinese emperor who is given two nightingales, one a living bird who is gray in color and sings with variation of tune, and one a mechanical bird who is covered with jewels and sings with precision. While captivated by the mechanical bird for many years, the emperor, upon facing death, realizes the value of the real bird. Analysis of one page of the text provides insights into the presuppositions made by the author regarding the implied reader's level of knowledge and language abilities. For example, the text reads:

> "Anyway, we have the better bird," they consoled themselves, and the artificial bird had to sing his song for the thirty-fourth time. The audience still had not learned it because it was so difficult. The music master praised the bird inordinately and declared he was superior to the real nightingale, not only in his exterior appearance but also in his voice. "You see, Your Majesty and my noble lords," he said, "with the real nightingale, one never knows what is coming, but everything is settled with the artificial bird. He can be taken to pieces, and the works can be

> examined to discover how the wheels fit into each other and how the sound is produced." Everybody agreed, and the music master received permission to show the bird to the people the next Sunday. "They should also hear him sing," commanded the Emperor. And so it happened. (p. 108)

World Knowledge. The author assumes that the reader possesses knowledge about China, the power of the emperor, and the political hierarchy, as well as knowledge of bird songs and mechanical means of imitating them. For example, the text states that the music master praised the artificial bird as superior to the real nightingale to the emperor and the noble lords. The reader must bring to the text the understanding that it is the job of the music master to please the emperor, that the lords are powerful political figures whose opinions are attended to by the emperor, and that gifts such as the nightingales are an important means of gaining favor with the emperor and the lords. The political advantages of convincing the emperor and the lords of the superiority of the mechanical bird must be understood in order to interpret the arguments of the music master and his desire to present the mechanical bird to the people.

Cultural Knowledge. The author assumes that the reader possesses an understanding of cultural values and

how these values affect the motivation and behaviors of the characters. The ancient Chinese were leaders in the world in technology, inventing gun powder, navigational equipment, and methods of construction. The technological appeal of the precision of the mechanical bird and the ability to understand its inner workings must be understood in order to interpret the music master's argument. His desire to please the emperor with his facts about the mechanical bird must be interpreted relative to the understanding that in the Chinese culture, pleasing the emperor assured a position in the palace for the master musician. This value system must be compared and contrasted to the opposite values corresponding to the mysteries of nature and the infinite variability of the songs produced by the real nightingale in order to interpret the conflict presented in the story.

Story Structure. The structure of the overall story is very complex, consisting of multiple episodes taking place across many years of time. The episodes are interactive, with events from one becoming embedded within those from another episode. The story is told from multiple perspectives, with some episodes told primarily from the emperor's perspective, while in others the nightingale serves as the primary character. Their story lines evolve separately in many episodes, but merge and

interact within others. Thus, the events are reciprocal, so that the reader must understand both the problem that each action taken by either the emperor or the nightingale was designed to solve, and the problems that the solutions themselves created in order to recognize the cumulative nature of the events.

Vocabulary. The author assumes that the reader possesses sufficient vocabulary to understand the story, and that the reader interprets these words at an appropriate level of abstractness. The words used in a text may be unfamiliar or difficult for a child, such as the words "consoled," "inordinately," "declared," or "exterior," many of which do not have concrete, visual referents (Nelson, 1985). Still other vocabulary words or phrases are metaphoric, such as "everything is settled," used to refer to the technological understanding about the mechanics of the artificial bird in contrast to the real nightingale where "one never knows what is coming." A literal interpretation of these words would lead to the incorrect conclusion such as the artificial bird had settled into a location while the real bird was in flight. At the middle school level, children are expected to possess a vocabulary of several thousand words, and to independently infer word meanings from contextual clues (Nippold, 1988).

Implicature. Much of the meaning of the text is communicated through linguistic implicature, rather than explicit statement. That is, the intended meaning of a word or phrase is merely implied, so that greater meaning must be activated by the words than their lexical meaning provides (Grice, 1975). The phrase "the music master received permission to show the bird to the people" on one level descriptively presents factual information about the actions taken by the music master. However, on another level, even though the information is not explicitly stated, this phrase suggests: (a) that only things considered to be extraordinary and impressive were shown to the people, (b) that visual beauty was an important dimension by which this judgment was made, (c) that the decisions were made only by the emperor and that there were consequences for presenting things to the people without explicit permission, and (d) that it was important to impress the people in order to maintain the status of the emperor as a divine and extraordinary figure. The meaning derived though implicature is both individually and culturally determined, based upon experience and knowledge as well as the linguistic ability to derive multiple interpretations of the same language.

In summary, language events, particularly in school literacy settings, are vastly complex; many interacting

levels of world, cultural, and linguistic knowledge, each equally complex, must be coordinated in order to interpret and share meaning or accomplish goals. Language is the medium by which this knowledge is communicated and organized. A level of competence is presumed by an author who uses language to write a text for an intended or implied reader, or by a teacher who presents a lecture or leads a discussion. The actual reader or listener must exhibit facility with a wide range of language abilities at the level presumed by the writer in order to reconstruct or share meaning as the writer intended. When these presuppositions are not met, the reader's (or listener's) transaction with the writer's text creates an incomplete new text, not parallel to the original, and communication breakdowns and failures may occur.

Language in a System of Knowing

The levels of knowledge and language abilities accompanying the previous literary excerpt represent age/level curricula requirements based on assumptions derived from cognitive developmental theory. Specifically, Piaget's theory (Piaget, 1970) of thought and language has been heavily influential within the realm of curriculum analysis (Dworetzky & Davis, 1989; Schubert, 1986). Piaget's (1970) idea that children move through a sequence of developmental stages is used as a criterion

for determining curriculum (e.g., sequence) of subject matter, activities, or experiences.

Consequently, Piaget's single, unified theory of children's cognitive and affective development represents an orientation toward children and how they learn (Joyce & Weil, 1980); thus, it may intangibly influence teachers' expectations, methods and approaches to instruction. Teacher expectations generally are based on the curriculum provided; therefore, the teacher implicitly supports the notion of a continuum of development from concrete to more abstract levels of cognitive and affective functioning. For example, if a teacher believes the maturation level and experience level of a middle school-age child necessarily imputes conventional knowledge of language and reading associated with his/her academic level, the teacher is likely to rely on a lecture and silent reading format to teach middle school students about different periods in world history. Therefore, curriculum design and teacher expectations are translated into pedagogical practices. The following section illustrates the stages of the Piagetian model as well as the related knowledge of and application of language assumed to accompany each advancing stage of cognitive development for middle school children.

Piagetian Approach

Middle school marks the beginning of the transition, in Piaget's terms, from concrete operational to formal operational thought (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget, 1955). The word operational refers to changes or transformations that can be imposed upon objects, such as making a round clay ball become long and flat, and then reversing the operation to make it round again. Development is an increasing ability to perform these operations mentally upon hypothetical, rather than physically real objects.

During the period of elementary school, children exhibit concrete operational thinking, where they can think logically about a problem and mentally perform operations such as reversibility, negation, or conservation, but only for ideas and objects for which they have had direct, concrete experience. Their thinking revolves around immediate and concrete objects rather than concepts and abstractions. Their language experiences of the objects are primarily representational; thus, the objects must have some physical characteristics in order for the child to mentally transform or recombine them in new ways. But beginning at middle school, children increasingly show the ability to apply logical operations to all classes of problems. They reason about abstract

propositions, objects, or concepts that they have not directly experienced. Because these adolescents think in abstract terms, they are able to perform mental operations upon linguistically created objects that have no concrete, observable existence.

These formal operational thinkers can reason logically about hypothetical situations, even when the concepts violate their experiences with reality. At this stage, children have recognized the fluidity of words as symbols whose manipulation in language is no longer dependent upon the tangibility of the objects. For example, in the literature selection **The Nightingale** (Anderson, reprinted 1980), the text indicates that it was typical at the time of illness for Death to visit an ill person and to present different versions of a person's head as representing the good and bad deeds performed during that person's lifetime. Concrete operational children have difficulty reasoning about such possibilities, because they are in contradiction to what is known about the real world. Their physical/experiential perception of phenomena, in this case illness, is stronger than the linguistically-created mental representation of a spirit appearing before a person. In contrast, formal operational thinkers would be able to mentally hypothesize the existence of such a

situation where a spirit might appear and to draw inferences about the possibilities of such a reflection upon one's life.

In addition, formal operational thought permits the reader to consider an ideal, imaginal state, even though it contradicts reality, and to compare what might occur within an ideal situation with the status quo. Thus, for the first time possibility can be logically considered in relationship to what is actual. This capacity enables the middle school child to think about the future as more than just an extension of present experience, but rather in terms of possibilities that are only imagined. For example, in **The Nightingale** (Anderson, reprinted, 1980), the Emperor of China was given an artificial nightingale by the Emperor of Japan. A range of reactions to the artificial bird is expressed, from those who believe the bird is a poor substitute compared to the live nightingale, to those who are thrilled because of the greater beauty of the artificial bird's colors, and the precision of the mechanical tones. A formal operational thinker can integrate those points of view, argue from a given perspective, and imagine possible outcomes from the different potential actions that can be taken by people who favor either the real or the mechanical bird.

However, while the previous discussion focused on normally developing middle school students, little attention has been paid to the at-risk student for which the traditional curriculum, teacher expectations regarding student learning, and instructional practices may not be appropriate. Because the presuppositions regarding world knowledge, cultural knowledge, story structure, vocabulary, and implicature would be beyond their experiential background, at-risk students have difficulty interpreting the previously presented literary excerpt.

At-Risk Middle School Students

In the middle school setting, language is increasingly used for thinking, learning, and problem solving. Concepts that can only be created through the use of language, such as our mental representations of the layers of the atmosphere and the relative effects of different sources of pollution on the ozone layer, become the topics for most classroom learning experiences. Unlike the typical middle school student's, the at-risk student's language and levels of abstraction can vary more in quality of communication. Little research has been conducted specifically evaluating the language of at-risk students within an academic setting where the range of abilities and developmental levels is divergent (Smith-Burke, 1989).

In 1976 Loban investigated the language habits of 211 students during a 13 year longitudinal study. His observations revealed such characteristics as disfluency (i.e., the inability to find words to express semantic intent), incoherence (i.e., the inability to organize the content of a message prior to its delivery), and ineffectiveness and lack of control (i.e., the inability to use a variety of structural patterns, master conventional grammar, and express higher level cognitive concepts by engaging in the use of conditional statements). These distinguishing language features would impede an at-risk students' ability to deal with curriculum in a conventional classroom.

Nippold and Fey (1983) observed difficulty with metaphoric language in their research population of at-risk students. They posit that perhaps these children have difficulty coping with figurative language. Specifically, these at-risk students would not be able to deal with much of today's literature where meaning is often communicated through linguistic implicature.

However, even when cognitive development and linguistic variation are accounted for, a student's educational success or failure is affected by socioeconomic level. According to Tough (1977) discrepancies exist between middle socioeconomic (SES) and

lower socioeconomic (SES) children's command of functional language. She found, for example, that whereas the middle SES children tended to use language to predict, work together, and imagine creatively, low SES children used language primarily to get attention and service their needs. This research is closely related to the language used by at-risk middle school students in the academic context. The following section describes how elicited language might in effect act as a window through which to view the abilities, desires, and strategies used by at-risk students during classroom discourse.

Language, Experience and Situation

Piaget examined the cognitive role of the self-discovering learner acting on his/her environment. He considered language an external agent that does not substantially affect underlying cognitive development. This theory undergirds the teacher's expectations of a single child's cognitive progress. However, linguistic and social differences need to be considered when examining how at-risk adolescents learn. Teachers must reevaluate their expectations of at-risk students in relation to curriculum demands and revise pedagogical approaches.

Situations in school may not be so familiar to at-risk students; their range of structuring of thought

symbols by observation and manipulation of the environment is limited. Donaldson's research (1978) demonstrates that children can build increasingly sophisticated thought and language structures in a developmental fashion, provided they evolve in life situations within the experience range of the children. It is surely reasonable that literacy events with an emphasis on dialogue between at-risk children and the adult teacher might support children learning language and learning how to make meaning. Therefore, consideration should be given to Vygotsky's (1978) cognitive approach that depicts conceptual structures, or complexes, built through language.

Vygotskian Approach

Similar to Piaget, Vygotsky (1962) postulated and described stages in the development of thinking that roughly correspond to Piaget's stages. These stages are a description of modes of thinking that children use when making sense of their world. Vygotsky (1978) viewed a learner's behaviors as reflecting only the completed part of development and not the potential for development. According to Vygotsky (1962), language of the environment, the dialogue between children and adult teachers, contributes to the learner's cognitive development. This may occur in the form of mediation, where an individual with more knowledge or competence at a task provides

assistance, often in the form of information or feedback, to the person with less proficiency. This enables learners to be immersed in actively participating in a behavior that is above their own independent level, and serves to guide or "bootstrap" development to a higher level.

The potential for Vygotsky existed within a range of what he called the "Zone of Proximal Development." This zone is bounded on the lower end by the completed part of development but on the upper end by the level of task performance at which the child could not perform even when provided socially mediated assistance. Within the Zone of Proximal Development lies that level of performance at which the child can perform when provided socially mediated assistance. Teacher mediation can take the form of asking a question, offering a useful hint, calling attention to overlooked information as a support for learners' synthesis of what they are learning into new concepts and schemas (Wertsch, 1984).

In summary, it appears that both types of learning (i.e., that constructed through interaction with objects, as well as that acquired through social mediation) are important to learning development. While the language demands imposed by the school environment are increasingly abstract and complex, information about the language and

literacy development that occurs during the middle school years is limited, and information specific to the at-risk student of this age is even more lacking.

The scope and complexity of language sophistication required of at-risk students to communicate competently within a classroom can be overwhelming and problematic. Because the concept of discourse is critical within a school setting, it is important to determine the relationship that exists between language demands and language actually used. An exploration of this relationship may lead to greater insights into learning at the middle school level for at-risk students, as well as to methods of teaching and interacting that can serve to minimize the distance between demands and performance. Therefore, this study examines a representative learning event with at-risk middle school students that may exemplify the intersecting demands of the classroom environment. In order to consider this relationship, the following chapter presents a framework for examining discourse, particularly literate discourse within a classroom community, as well as a qualitative method of investigation.

CHAPTER II

A FRAMEWORK FOR A LITERATE DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

Introduction

Language is embedded within many interacting contexts of use. Words are firmly fixed within meaningful units such as phrases, phrases within sentences, sentences within discourse structures, discourse structures within contexts of social interactions. Classrooms are contexts for social interactions embedded within broader situational contexts, situational contexts within cultural contexts, and so forth, each level both affected by and in turn affecting all other levels (Bruce, 1981). Because children bring cultural and world knowledge to social interactions in classroom situational contexts, such as literature discussions, the language used within this context reflects the multiple levels of knowledge and meaning. Thus, when examining the relationship between the language demands encountered by at-risk middle school children in the context of literature discussions and the language actually used by the students within this context, it is important to understand the multiple levels of context.

In order to establish a framework for examining language and discourse, this chapter discusses the

following: (a) a semiotic theory which forms a basis for interpreting the relationship between the reader and the text; (b) the nature of discourse, particularly in the classroom context, and theories of discourse that inform the present research; (c) concepts of literacy, literate style of discourse, and the classroom as a social community, resulting in a literate discourse community; (d) the use of illustrated storybook reading, with special emphasis on its place within a literate discourse community at the middle school level; (e) a semiotic perspective which makes comprehensible the later analyses of the relationship between talk and illustrated storybook reading; (f) a qualitative method of investigation, particularly addressing the teacher/researcher in a participant observation method; and (e) questions that guided this research, based on the developing literature review, are presented.

Semiotic Theory

Semiotic theory is a useful framework for understanding discourse, and in particular the interactive discourse that occurs in the context of small group illustrated storybook reading in this study. Semiotic theory provides a perspective from which to examine signs that unite the pictures and words contained in the illustrated text (i.e., narrative). The sign, as it is

presented through the text and illustrations, can be examined in relation to the interpretations of the sign that are made by the participants (Golden & Gerber, 1990). In order to accomplish this goal, semiotic theory considers the event in terms of a triadic relationship that exists between the signified, the sign, and the interpretant (Peirce, 1955).

The signified within the triadic relationship is that which is referred to, and may be either a physical object (e.g., a tree or a bird), or a mental object (e.g., "beauty"). The sign is some signal that establishes reference to the object, and may consist of (a) an icon, or something that looks or sounds like the signified object (e.g., a drawing of a bird, the word "peep"), (b) an index, or something that refers to the signified object through a logical or natural association (e.g., a feather falling from a tree suggesting a bird is perched in the branches), or (c) a symbol, or something that maintains a purely arbitrary relationship with the signified (e.g., the word "bird" referring to the feathered animal for no reason other than conventional agreement between speakers of a language). The interpretant is the mental representation that the sign refers to. It is different from the actual object, and is a mentally constructed representation that is unique to each individual (i.e., an

interpretant for the word "bird" will depend upon personal experience, acquired knowledge, cultural attitudes, personal response to, and associations with birds). The interpretant is dynamic and flexible, changing configuration depending upon the context in which the sign is used (e.g., "The bird chased the cat" versus "We ate the bird at Thanksgiving").

Each person or interpreter will exhibit a unique interpretation of a sign because of the personal nature of the interpretant. For example, each student in a classroom may hear the words "She pointed to a little gray bird in the branches of a tree" (from The Nightingale, Anderson, reprinted 1980), but one student might only interpret the meaning on a concrete, literal level (e.g., a girl pointed to a bird), while another might draw a story inference (e.g., they found the nightingale that they were looking for), while yet another might interpret the statement as a contradiction of world knowledge (e.g., the nightingale is actually brown in color with a chestnut-brown tail). Thus, the sign is influenced by the psychological, biological, and sociological aspects of the interpreter's development and environment, or the pragmatic conditions of language use (Morris, 1938).

The interpretant not only changes configuration depending upon the context of use, but also in relation to

growth and expansion. New experiences or additional information refine the interpretant so that the same sign used in the same context (e.g., rereading a passage) will take on new or transformed meaning (Peirce, 1955). For example, upon learning that the nightingale had never been heard to sing by anyone in China, the sentence above might be reinterpreted to suggest that the girl had discovered the bird with its unique song. If the use of the sign takes place in a social context, such as a small discussion group, this growth and expansion of the interpretant can be influenced by the comments and responses made by the other participants. A comment made by one participant, such as "The nightingale was one of the most beautiful song birds," could change the interpretant for another individual from "She found a bird" to "They want the nightingale for its song."

While the interpretant is individualistic and private, at the same time it must be sufficiently conventional and social for the sign to maintain any communicative value. In the case of language, for example, the words must refer to sufficiently similar features of the interpretant for all users of the language to share meaning through sign usage (Bates, 1976). An incorrect or incomplete relationship between the sign and its object, or the sign and the interpretant, will result

in communication breakdowns such as misinterpretations or lack of shared meaning (Arwood, 1983). In order to maximize the communicative effectiveness of sign, conventional strategies are used in order to make meaning more explicit. The sign is thus connected to the structure, or the ground dictated by these conventions. In the case of language, these include the use of word order to specify the relationships between agents, their actions or states, and objects, or grammar; the use of markers to specify relationships of time, role, number, or state, or morphology; and the use of event order and role specification to establish relationships of time, motivation, intentionality, space, causality, and conditionality between events, or story grammar (Golden & Gerber, 1990; Peirce, 1955; Stein & Glenn, 1979).

In this study, then, semiotics is the perspective employed to understand why and how students' responses represent a reflection of their developing interpretants to the signs presented as illustrated storybook material. In the case of illustrated storybooks, the narrative is conveyed through both words (i.e., symbols) and pictures (i.e., icons). The respondent must interpret and integrate both sources of information, or both types of sign in order to understand the story. It is the relationship between the pictures and the words that

constitutes the narrative. While conceivably the story could be understood from either the words only or the picture only, it would not be the same story as when both systems work in integration to create the sign (Barthes, 1977). For example, an illustration of a small girl dressed in a beautifully embroidered Chinese robe pointing to the bird in the excerpt above suggests a different story than an illustration of the same scene with an old woman wearing rags. The illustration places limitations upon the interpretant signified by the words, and vice versa (Golden & Gerber, 1990).

The signified, or object of the illustrated storybook, is the sequence of events to which the story world refers (Scholes, 1982). These are events never directly experienced by the child, composed of characters, objects, and actions never observed by the child. Thus, a displaced relationship exists between the signs used to create the story (i.e., relationship of sign to object) and the interpretation of the signs by the child (i.e., relationship of sign to interpretant). For many stories, the signs do not refer to any objects that actually exist in the real world, and must be mentally constructed through symbols (e.g., description of a dragon must create the mental representation) (Nelson, 1985).

The student engaged in interactive storybook reading events must attend to all levels of sign usage and contextualization in order to interpret the narrative symbol. The extent to which this integration is successful as a mental interpretation will be reflected in the interpretant. In turn, within a discourse context, communication of the interpretant may reflect the participant's interest in elaboration and refinement of the interpretant through verbal comments produced by him/her in the context of the discussion (Morris, 1964). Thus, while the interpretant is an internal representation, the discourse that results from it is observable and open to objective study (Golden & Gerber, 1990).

In addition, the effects of the discourse context, including the comments and insights provided by the participants, are also observable and provide a means of examining the effectiveness of a literate discourse community in facilitating language learning and development. In order to understand sign usage in the context of the small group illustrated storybook reading event, the nature of discourse must first be explored.

Nature of Discourse

The study of discourse is the study of communication systems operating within a particular social setting,

sometimes called "the universe of discourse" (Moffett, 1968). The cosmos of a speaker's communicative competence includes a spectrum of communication purposes, aims and functions. For example, the classroom is a social setting with many types of communication events where discourse functions as media through which much teaching and learning take place. Among such classroom discourses are the language of the curriculum (Moffett & Wagner, 1983), much of it used to control the actions, beliefs, and behavior of others (McNeil, 1986), and the language used to establish and express personal identity (Britton, 1982; Cazden, 1988). Through language, students integrate what they already know in order to interpret information presented to them. This depends on the social relationships, including the communication system, which the teacher sets up (Cazden, 1988).

The communication system established within the classroom will depend to a large extent upon the teacher's theoretical orientation toward teaching and learning. For example, if the teacher's theory of literature is based upon the assumption that the meaning is inherent in the text, then communications will focus upon eliciting and evaluating acceptable or "correct" interpretations of the text (Bloome & Green, 1982; Golden, 1990). However, if the teacher's view emphasizes an interactive,

collaborative process of jointly constructing the meaning of the text, then communications will focus upon facilitating personal and individualized responses that encourage differences in interpretation and contradictory conclusions, as well as synthesis and integration (Bloome & Green, 1982).

Theories of Discourse

Many theorists (Britton, 1979; Kinneavy, 1980; Moffett, 1968) have attempted to describe models of pedagogical or schoolish discourse, the structures and processes of discipline thought that occur within the classroom. While Crusius (1989) points out that there is little consensus regarding these models, several theories have been influential in playing major roles in conceiving classroom discourse. What follows is a description of three discourse theories that are relevant to this study in that they focus on language--what in the situation evokes language use, to what end language is used, and what understandings are evident through language use during the event.

Social Discourse

Moffett (1968) emphasized the role of social relationships in his view of discourse. He perceived discourse as an ongoing process, and therefore dynamic and continuing. The process of engaging in discourse both

changes and is changed by the learning that occurs through its use in context. Moffett does not view language simply as something that people use as a tool or as a neutral conduit for thought. His conception of language is what we are; language is ontological, human-making. It allows us to be part of our species and of our culture. As Moffett explains, "self and mind are social artifacts, and the constituents of the self mirror the constituents of society; thought involves incorporating the roles and attitudes of others and addressing oneself internally as one would address another externally" (p. 67). Language makes community possible and community is the source of self, thought and culture. Because of this, Moffett contends that everything we are is language-centered.

Through the concept of abstraction (Moffett, p. 18) Moffett asserts the interdependence of symbolic expression (i.e., discourse) and general cognitive growth. Dynamic relations exist in any instance of language use where the speaker abstracts from the situation what he/she chooses to transform cognitively, and simultaneously the speaker abstracts for an audience what he/she chooses to communicate about that cognitive transformation.

Within a classroom where communication events are situations designed with the purpose of expanding students' communicative competence, Moffett's notion of

abstraction would require that consideration should be given to the situational context. Specifically, attention is given to the degree or the extent to which language learning and use is contextualized (i.e., clues to the meaning and purpose of the language are present within the physical context), and the level of displacement (i.e., the cognitive distance at which the information is organized within the environment (Piaget, 1955; Vygotsky, 1962). For example, illustrated storybooks, present symbolic structures, with substituted objects, representations and replicas of events in which many aspects or perspectives on the topic are integrated. The level of displacement required of the student would necessitate developing a secondary world (Bruner, 1986), where the story context exists only within the student's mind, with no real world objects or events that correspond to mental constructions created purely out of text and illustrations.

Function of Discourse

Influenced by Jakobson's (1960, 1974) model of constitutive factors in a speech situation and the functions ascribable to an utterance, Britton (1970, 1982) elaborated on the different purposes, levels, and uses of discourse in the classroom. The curriculum in the classroom is dependent upon those purposes, levels, and

uses of discourse as they are jointly used and created by the teacher and the children. This may, in fact, be different from the stated or intended curriculum (e.g., Apple's hidden curriculum, 1979). These purposes, levels, and uses can be viewed as different modes of discourse existing along a continuum from relatively unstructured and immature expression, appearing most simply as expressive discourse (i.e., self expression), and continuing toward the increased formality of transactional discourse (i.e., informative, persuasive, but also coercive, regulatory) and poetic discourse (i.e., narratives, verses) uses of language (Britton, 1982; Crusius, 1989).

The degree and function of the discourse organization imposed upon the information communicated within a situational context by the text and the teacher is the discourse context. The textual organization can range from random presentation of events with or without a unifying topic, to highly structured, topic focused presentations of information integrating many aspects or perspectives on the topic. The participants' discourse construction of the textual organization ranges along a continuum with (a) transactional/expository functions on one end, in which the goal is to communicate or regulate factual information, through (b) expressive functions

where personal reactions or impressions are given, and, oppositionally, (c) poetic/narrative functions situated at the other end of the continuum, in which culturally determined conventions of form are used to convey meaning and values through media such as poetry and narrative (Norris & Hoffman, in press). For example, an author uses language to create a narrative selection with many interactive topics that transform time, space, causality, conditionality, inclusion, exclusion, and other relations between concepts, objects and events. In turn, participants must internalize the mental structures of events referring to themselves and not existing outside of the interactive narrative in order to comprehend and communicate through personally structured discourse, interpreting the text and expressing ideas.

Narrative Discourse

By drawing on Burke's (1969) dramatistic theory, Golden (1990) constructed a theory of narrative discourse, a method of analyzing the language of the text and the language in context. Central to Burke's dramatistic method of analysis is the notion that language and thought are modes of action. Five key terms (i.e., act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) form the pentad's grammar and function as a generative principle for attributing and exploring motives (Burke, 1969).

Using Burke's pentad as a framework, Golden's theory parses narrative into intrinsic and extrinsic relations: intrinsic involves the conceptions presented within the text itself, and extrinsic involves the interpretation of that text within a social context. Her theory posits five characteristics that are common to both intrinsic and extrinsic relations in narrative: (a) act, (b) scene, (c) agent, (d) agency, and (e) purpose.

The act of the intrinsic involves the plot and focuses upon what transpires in thought and action within the story, while the act of the extrinsic involves the thoughts and actions that occur within and between the readers as they interpret and reconstruct the plot. The scene of the intrinsic involves the setting of the story, or the situation in which the act occurs, while the scene of the extrinsic involves the mediated interactions that occur within the classroom between the teacher and students. The agent of the intrinsic involves the characters of the story, while the agent of the extrinsic involves the authors and readers, each with their own background knowledge and motivations for engaging in the narrative discourse. The agency of the intrinsic refers to the medium, or in this case the voice of the narrator, while the agency of the extrinsic refers to the medium of presentation, which may include print, illustration, oral

performance, or film. The purpose of the intrinsic relates to the motivation or goals of the characters, while the purpose of the extrinsic reflects goals such as learning, entertainment, escape, or vicarious experiences.

Application of Discourse Types

Moffett's (1968) theory of discourse offers a general developmental framework for the classroom. Moffett maintains that language is a symbol system and that students need to learn how to operate the system in oral and written form. He explores the relations among kinds of discourse formed through "any verbalizing of any phenomena, whether thought, spoken, or written; literary or nonliterary" (Moffett, 1968, p. 9). Furthermore, he contends, as students perceive more abstract relations to audience and subject, they gain control over language and learn to differentiate the universe of discourse. By integrating the universe of discourse and merging the day-to-day drama of the classroom, language and discourse development become virtually indistinguishable.

Narrative discourse (Golden, 1990) embedded within a classroom setting generally occurs for purposes such as learning. But narrative discourse does not exist in isolation within this setting. Other types and levels of discourse are used pragmatically within this context in order to facilitate learning. For example, teachers and

students engage in transactional discourse as questions are asked and answered, experiences are shared, and meaning is negotiated (Britton, 1982). Expressive discourse occurs as participants react to events and make comments related to their self perceptions. Thus, analysis of the process and nature of interactions that occur within the classroom events, such as small group interactive readings of illustrated literature, would involve both an examination of the narrative discourse itself and the mediated learning that occurs through expressive and transactional discourse acts (Britton, 1982; Golden, 1990).

Classrooms are scenes for social interaction through discourse. Research on classroom discourse has provided information about uses and structures of oral language in classrooms (Cazden, 1986). While the value of this information has been recognized, the overriding significance of communication remains the critical component of classroom teaching and learning for at-risk middle school students. By studying the nature of classroom discourse through the exploration of communication demands within a situation/context and the role of talk in learning within that context, a more comprehensive description of the learning demands imposed

on at-risk middle school students can be developed and hence what can be done to facilitate literacy learning for them.

Literacy, Discourse, and Community

Literacy can be viewed from many perspectives. It can be viewed in relation to the manner in which it develops, the methods of instruction used to teach or facilitate this development, the participants' response to literacy events, the use of literacy to accomplish goals, and cultural and social influences upon literacy development and use. In each of these cases, literacy is integrally related to discourse and the multiple levels of context in which it occurs (Bruce, 1981).

Literate Discourse

As children develop literacy, the language that they use becomes increasingly more formal and literate in content and style. Sulzby (1985), in her longitudinal study of emergent literacy, showed that young children initially use oral language strategies to talk about the pictures present within storybooks, with little attention to plot or written language. With experience, children progress though additional stages of refinement, first telling oral stories that are consistent with the plot of the book, and then telling stories that are written with emerging language conventions, with intonation and wording

that is more like reading than conversation. After frequent repetitions, the readers' language begins to match the story page-by-page, often recited verbatim employing such complex and formal conventions of grammar and vocabulary in written language. Increasingly, the child's focus changes from learning the story by attending to the picture, to learning by attending to the print as actual reading and writing begin to emerge, reflecting fluency in uses and styles of language.

As fluency in reading is achieved, oral language is used to respond to the text and to move beyond the author's words to include interpretation and response to literature. It is therefore recursive: readers return to forms of reading in which they were engaged when they were responding only to the illustrations. Middle school-age children in particular are interested in personal response, or how a story made them feel or react (Applebee, 1978). They begin to use literature as a means of understanding their own lives, and for learning how to respond to the new challenges and situations that they begin to experience as they move into adolescence (Early, 1984). They are able to retell the story in a theme-focused manner, including both the objective details and their subjective, or personal response to the theme and point of the story. Thus, the discussions that occur in

response to stories reflect a style of literate discourse that is more formal and reflective than language used to merely tell a story (Applebee, 1978).

Classroom Community

The traditional classroom has focused upon individual effort and performance, with the teacher acting to dispense knowledge and students acting individually to learn the given information (Freire's banking model, 1972). The classroom climate is formal, structured in a manner that separates students in all aspects of learning, from the physical arrangement of furniture to the competitive system of performance testing and grade assignment. Because middle school students are presumed to have matured cognitively beyond the necessity of oral reading, few opportunities are provided for oral language use and development (Watson, 1987; Wells, 1985, 1986). The focus in this environment is on individual achievement and effort; here, the adult functions as the repository of both meaning and the discursive practices which authorize them. The teacher engages in most of the talking, including giving oral instructions, delivering lectures, and regulating the behaviors of class members.

However, some current research has disputed both the explanatory theoretical power and the practical efficacy of this model (Goodman, Smith, Meredith, & Goodman, 1987;

Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, & Nelson, 1981; Slavin, 1980). This research has proposed and tested a more collaborative, interactive classroom environment in which students are provided with opportunities to use language to engage in planning, organizing, evaluating, and other forms of critical thought and language functioning. This kind of active participation enables children to use their own language and experience to engage in the creation of their own discourses in classrooms. Here, they use language to talk about difficult or abstract concepts, to receive feedback and additional information to extend and expand their ideas, to hear models of language produced by others to explain and discuss a topic organized within complex discourse structures, and to internalize the concepts and the language in ways that are different from those that the Piagetian model would suggest. This process of internalization is reflected in development, as the child becomes increasingly more able to use language for more abstract and critical purposes with greater independence and refinement (Vygotsky, 1962). This view of the classroom considers use of talk to be an important component of literacy and learning (Delamont, 1983; Green & Wallat, 1981).

Importance of Talk in the Classroom

Mediation of learning occurs to a great extent through talking. Vygotsky (1962) views speech as the primary means by which knowledge is internalized. Speech externalizes thought. It is through talk that thoughts are reshaped. Thought does not merely find its expression in speech, but rather it undergoes changes and begins to acquire reality and form as it is put into words. This process of externalizing thought through speech allows it to be acted upon mentally. This mental action helps to create an internal representation, or a reorganization of the concept with greater clarity and elaboration (Vygotsky, 1962).

Talk is important to social development, as well as cognitive development. Talk provides a mechanism for working through, sorting, organizing, the evaluating the events of daily living, and thus functions as a primary means by which humans develop as individuals and social beings (Martin & Medway, 1976). It imposes order upon living, and gives meaning to events that would lose significance without a means of reflecting and reorganizing the experience (Britton, 1982). It is through talk that we interpret experience and regulate our actions based upon conclusions drawn from past events.

The importance of talk is often undervalued, if not outright denied, in the name of efficient orderliness in the traditional classroom. According to this view, while talk may be instrumental in helping children to reach conclusions, resolve problems, identify and clarify new ideas or issues, and internalize strategies and structures of knowledge and learning, it resists the imposition of a visible product at the end of it (Martin & Medway, 1976), which renders it unquantifiable and therefore irrelevant in the discourse of classroom accountability. Talk involves the process of thinking, questioning, comparing, and considering, rather than the completed product of learning. Because it is difficult to quantify, its importance may be easy to overlook unless the focus of the classroom centers upon the process of learning, rather than the end products.

A focus upon the process of learning through talking highlights the manner in which the teacher and students operate as they seek to organize and make sense of their world. During the process the participants share their socio-cultural, linguistic, and cognitive talents as on-going, meaning-making activities. The participants are willing to modify and adjust their interpretations in order to accommodate a variety of communicative purposes and goals (Bloome, 1987) as the process unfolds.

Mediated Learning in the Classroom

Mediated learning refers to the role of the adult in structuring an experience where children can form and test hypotheses, acquire insights, and derive solutions when provided prompts, feedback, and new information (Vygotsky, 1962). This type of mediated experience enables children to actively participate at a level of discussion and learning that is more abstract and complex than they would be able to engage in without such assistance, or a range of understanding that Vygotsky refers to as the Zone of Proximal Development. The zone is defined as being bounded at the lower end by the abilities that an individual independently demonstrates when performing a task, such as the degree of independent word recognition and comprehension when reading a passage. The upper end of the zone refers to the level of performance that can be engaged in when assistance is provided by a facilitator who has more knowledge or skill at that task. This might be represented by an increasing ability to read and interpret the meaning of a passage when time is taken to discuss the events and when assistance is provided to enable the learners to engage in active prediction, reflection, and analysis regarding the meaning and purpose behind a character's actions and states.

Vygotsky (1962) believed that providing information or tasks primarily near the lower end of the zone limits a child's experience with more abstract and complex aspects of the event and thus serves to inhibit or place limitations upon learning. In contrast, engaging the child in active participation at a level that is significantly above independent abilities exposes the child to qualitatively more advanced ways of viewing a situation and in problem solving using strategies unavailable to the child without assistance. The facilitation provided by the adult or more advanced peer enables the child to contribute to and participate successfully within the higher level event, and thus to gradually attend to and internalize the more abstract ways of viewing and performing the task. Learning that occurs near the higher end of the zone serves to lead and guide development, as the internalized knowledge is used in new contexts and situations to interpret events and solve problems using qualitatively more advanced strategies.

The information that the adult chooses to expose children to in the context of mediated learning can range from relatively static, concrete knowledge that is consistent with the lower end of the zone of proximal learning, to information that is challenging and insightful, consistent with the upper limits of that zone,

through information that is confusing and uninterpretable to the child, indicating that it is above the child's individual zone of proximal learning. It is important that the adult be sensitive to the amount of abstraction and complexity that can be internalized by the participants in an event, and the methods of mediation that are effective in facilitating this learning for those participants.

In the context of interactive readings with illustrated literature, the content and style of the mediation provided by the teacher can influence the narrative that is created, exposing the participants to only the most concrete, isolated, and narrow interpretations of events, or to levels of greater abstractness, integration, and world and culturally based interpretations of events (Golden, 1990; Martinez & Teale, 1989). Factors such as the adult's discussion concerning what is happening in the story and the adult's receptivity to contributions made by children in the group all interact in the process of mediated learning (Bloome & Green, 1982; Golden, 1990).

Classroom as a Community of Learners

Research on the classroom as a context for learning has begun to focus on the notion of a community of learners, where an atmosphere of cooperation, belonging,

trust, and group support is established (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988; Short & Pierce, 1990; Torbe & Medway, 1981). In this view, the emphasis is on the classroom community as a social entity, where individuals interact with language and with each other in collaborative efforts to learn and to construct meaning for a textual artifact from experience (Cazden, 1986). The classroom climate is collaborative, where the physical arrangements enable small groups of students to work together in community and where language interaction is facilitated during cooperative efforts (Loughlin & Martin, 1987).

Developing such a community during the middle school years can be of great value. While research (Glasser, 1990; McLaren, 1988; McNeil, 1986) has demonstrated the social/cognitive difficulties that adolescents face when making the transition from elementary to secondary learning, the establishment of an environment friendly to the emergence of a classroom community can facilitate learning by encouraging learners to form relationships and dialogues. The significant feature of this community lies in the atmosphere of commitment to thinking together, where the teacher and students work cooperatively to build new ideas that go beyond what could be achieved individually.

Learning language and communication skills are not behaviors that develop in social isolation or through individual effort. Rather, active participation within a language community is required for communication to refine (Loughlin & Martin, 1987). Students must have frequent opportunities to express their ideas using language, and to receive feedback on the quality, relevance, and clarity of these ideas. The child's language must be valued by the teacher, and the classroom must adapt to the individual differences of the learners within the community; it is self-defeating to expect each child to adjust to the school and to conform to the teacher's language expectations (Cazden, 1988). In such a context, children learn how to function effectively within a classroom community, operating successfully within the classroom's discursive contexts.

Literate Discourse Community

The term literate discourse community (Speaker, 1990) is used to describe a type of middle-school classroom setting in which the properties of literacy, discourse development, and community based interactions are encouraged and maintained. Unlike the traditional middle school setting where students change classrooms, teachers, and topics of study throughout the day, a literate discourse community setting is characterized by a single

teacher, or team of teachers who integrate the curriculum, maintaining a unified theme that is explored throughout all classroom events. Oral language is an important component of all classroom events, and the physical and social setting of the classroom is organized in order to facilitate interaction and discussion between small groups of students who collaborate to investigate a specific topic or problem.

Reading Events

The typical classroom day can be examined by dividing it into events, such as music time, math instruction, participation in reading, or writing (Cazden, 1986). Much research has focused upon reading events as they occur during the classroom day, not only as academic events but also as social events. The social roles of both teachers and students have been examined within the context of these reading events (Golden & Gerber, 1990). Some of these events are formal, occurring in the context of reading groups or classroom discussions and adhering to rules for turn-taking, raising hands, and receiving teacher feedback. Others are informal, occurring spontaneously throughout the day and including reading trade books, environmental print, daily schedules, and the work of peers. One important component of the literate discourse community is the small group reading event.

For many at-risk students, reading is a difficult process. Many of these students have experienced failure and are one or more grade levels below age expectations in reading achievement, some performing only at a second grade level of reading ability. One method of providing these students with successful experiences with literacy is the use of illustrated literature in the context of interactive reading events. Interactive reading events consist of dialogues that occur between the teacher and the students in the context of reading illustrated literature. Oral discussion is used to interpret the literature through examination of the illustrations, cooperative reading of the text, and oral discussion of the text. Students are encouraged to share personal responses as well as interpretations of explicitly stated story events within the context of the reading events (Mason, McCormick, & Bhavnagri, 1986; Ninio, 1980).

Initially, interactive reading events with at-risk students resemble in many respects (e.g., vocalizing, pointing, and touching their book) descriptions of mother-infant (Lamme, 1985) and mother-toddler (Ninio & Bruner, 1978) in read-aloud sessions with picture books. With increasing interactive literature-based experience, at-risk students' focus changes from the reading situation to the story itself. These students have a strong tendency

to see personal response as an attribute of the story itself, a tendency Applebee (1978) also noted among children developing a concept of story. In order to appreciate the importance of making literary conversation (i.e., nurturing more highly developed responses over time) part of classroom life for at-risk students, presumedly in the context of interactive reading using illustrated literature, the following section describes research on storybook reading.

Storybook Reading

Research (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 1984; Martinez & Roser, 1985; Panofsky, 1986; Taylor, 1986) on the use of storybook reading has been confined to the parent/child dyads, preschool, and kindergarten through third grade groups. These studies have demonstrated that many benefits accrue from these experiences. Children who are read to at home and/or as part of the regular classroom practice demonstrate increases in general vocabulary and language abilities (Cohen, 1968; Feitelson, Kita, & Goldstein, 1986; Snow & Goldfield, 1982). When provided with episodes of repeated readings of the same storybook, children attempt to produce more complex sentence structures modelled by adults, and refer to concepts introduced by adults in previous readings (Snow, 1983; Snow & Goldfield, 1982).

Children also begin to internalize structures and strategies used to organize experience from these storybook reading episodes. Aspects of narrative structure are learned, as the child first labels characters and objects depicted in the illustrations and then begins to attribute action and intention to these entities. As these single actions begin to become connected in relationships of time, location, causality, and logic, stories with recognizable story structure begin to emerge, first exhibited in conversational dialogue, but progressively becoming more formal in style and language (Sulzby, 1985).

Discoveries related to the function and conventional form of print are made in the context of storybook reading. Children begin to adopt a literate style of talking about stories and pay increasing attention to the print when attempting to recall and/or read the book. Knowledge of the alphabet, as well as conventions such as left-to-right reading, concepts of wordness, and other reading like behaviors emerge from storybook reading experiences (Clay, 1982; Sulzby, 1985).

Storybook reading is highly facilitating to learning, in part because of the social interactions that occur within this context. That is, adults and children share insights and interactively create the meaning and

affective response to the story. Adults ask questions, elicit comments, provide feedback, and in many other ways assist the child to talk about the story at a level more abstract and elaborated than the child could independently participate (Bloome, 1985; Flood, 1977; Heath, 1982; Ninio & Bruner, 1978). Through this process of mediated learning, children discover how to interpret events depicted in pictures, learn vocabulary and word order strategies to represent knowledge acquired from the reading, organize and elaborate upon their thoughts, and acquire conventions of discourse structures, such as narratives (Sulzby, 1985).

The acquisition of specific knowledge or skills, such as new vocabulary or conventions of print, represents the completed part of development, or the products of learning (Vygotsky, 1962). But mediated interactions also enhance the process of learning: Through social interaction, children are helped to think about information in new ways, to combine knowledge into new configurations, and to solve problems using higher order strategies (Vygotsky, 1962). They are assisted to use cognitive skills that may be just emerging, or to refine abilities that are still immature or limited in application.

Development of language is not completed in early childhood. Considerable language development occurs

throughout the school years, and beyond (Loban, 1976; Wiig & Semel, 1984). Not only the structure of language, but also adeptness in use continues to develop and refine throughout adolescence. Structures such as narrative discourse begin to be used for more sophisticated purposes, such as providing a framework for interpreting world events (Stein & Glenn, 1979). One way to encourage narrative discourse development is to implement what Britton (1968) called "the improved response, the developed sense of form" through close reading of a literature selection. Under these circumstances students' responses begin to generate conscious links and connections that mark a reader of literature.

Reader-Response

Rosenblatt (1938/1983) describes reading as a transaction wherein the reader constructs a personal envisionment of meaning guided by a blueprint offered by the text. She proposes that a "live circuit" exists between the reader and the text through evocation of images and associations which determine what the selection communicates to the reader. The reader's response to the text is both intellectual and emotional, and these two types of reaction impart personal meaning into the pattern of verbal symbols used by the author. The verbal symbols of the text, in turn, serve to channel the reader's

thoughts and feelings. Thus, responses to literature are guided by the feelings and experiences of readers while at the same time the text shapes the readers by creating new experiences and orientations. Other theorists such as Britton (1970), Fish (1980), and Iser (1980) echo Rosenblatt's concern with personal meaning-making as the heart of readers' response to literature.

Readers' responses, according to Beach and Hynds (1991), should be viewed as being influenced by readers' beliefs and attitudes; that is, certain cultural orientations and restraints may act upon readers as a result of membership in society (Cherland, 1992). What the reader brings to the literary work and what the reader must do to make sense out of it is represented in his/her response to literature.

Gender-related response. Several theorists (Edelsky, 1981; Lakoff, 1990; Tannen, 1990) have posited that gender differences may affect conversations and readings. Tannen (1990) offers detailed analysis of gender-related styles of talk used by adults and by children. For example, she posits that men view the world as a hierarchical organization; thus, they tend to engage in conversations as negotiations in which people try to maintain their position of dominance. Women, on the other hand, see themselves immersed in a network of connections causing

conversations that resemble negotiations for closeness through which consensus is sought (pp. 24-25). It may be that Tannen's investigations signal the possibility of different modes of responding to literature for the teacher and the students.

Gilligan (1982) cautions that response to a moral dilemma may reflect different forms of moral understanding for females and males. She analzyed the responses of a sixth-grade female and a sixth-grade male to a moral dilemma devised by Kohlberg (1981). While the male placed greater emphasis on "justice" or objective logical values to analyze the situation, the female more strongly valued "care and responsibility," or an emphasis on consequences as they relate to caregiving and human relationship. Since literary selections for middle school students often depict predicaments, moral or otherwise, these gender-related differences need to be considered in relation to students' responses in the context of an interactive reading of illustrated literature.

Limitations of Stance Categories. Readers' response exemplifying interaction between emotional/personal (i.e., affective response), and factual/thematic (i.e., intellectual interpretation), have been studied in older students in the context of written, non-illustrated text. These studies are concerned with the processes that both

individual readers and groups of readers use to construct personal and shared meanings about literature (Beach & Hynds, 1991). Despite the abundance of research supporting reader-response theories and practices, stance categories are not designed to reveal how females and males make moral decisions. Specifically, gender-related responses remain elusive when using stance categories.

Another limitation of stance categories lies in the reader's ability to have a lived-through literary event. Purcell-Gates (1991) suggests that not all readers are able to step into literature or to have a lived-through literary experience. By spending disproportionate amounts of time being outside an envisionment, the remedial readers consistently failed to construct evolving wholes of stories they read. She (1991) argued that the language of literary texts appeared to be a major barrier to the students' lived-through literary experience.

These results suggest that at-risk middle school age students faced with language demands imposed by written text may be outside an envisionment of the evolving story without support. A critical new characteristic of an interactive reading event, then, is the use of illustrated literature to facilitate the development of literate discourse abilities needed for higher academic achievement and literacy development. Therefore, to minimize the

distance between demands and performance within an interactive reading event, the teacher may scaffold the students' participation through the use of a familiar medium, illustrations.

Importance of Storybook Reading with Illustrations

Illustrated literature provides multiple mediums for the expression of the relationships present within a narrative. Illustrations attract the respondents in a manner that is primarily aesthetic at first. The illustrations elicit responses that are emotional or personal, based initially upon private reactions to the visual images (Solomon, 1986). This affective response is generally followed by an attempt to embed the illustration in some context of intellectual meaning, in order to understand the concept of the story and to interpret the visual symbols in accord with some topic or theme. The printed text of the story frequently specifies the context or scene from which the illustration is to be interpreted. Each medium thus provides unique information that can be used in order to form hypotheses, draw conclusions, and interpret events (Golden, 1990; Golden & Gerber, 1990).

This integration of affective and intellectual response has been studied in the context of illustrated literature with populations of younger children. Kiefer (1988) studied the responses of children from three

elementary classrooms for a period of forty weeks in order to investigate changes in both affective and intellectual responses to the text over time. She concluded that in this classroom setting, responses became more elaborated and integrated with time.

From her observations, Kiefer determined that the teachers were instrumental in the development of response. It was found that the teachers provided the children time to look at, think about, and talk about books to one another, as well as with the adults. In each of the story reading events the teachers encouraged the children to make connections between their own world and the world of picture books. Providing the children with numerous opportunities to return often to books helped to deepen their emotional response, as well as to broaden their intellectual knowledge of the topic. Kiefer's study suggests that children are active constructors of affective, as well as intellectual, meanings as they respond to illustrated literature.

Literature interactions can be affected by group size as well as teacher methods. Student participation and involvement tends to increase when students who are not so aggressive in their responding behaviors are more likely to gain the floor in smaller groups (Filby, 1980; Noli, 1980). The following section appraises the value of small

group reading and the potential benefit it affords at-risk students during interactive story reading.

Small Group Reading with Illustrated Text

The value of interactive reading using illustrated storybooks with young children has been recognized by researchers, teachers, and parents for many years (Durkin, 1966; Sutton, 1964; Teale, 1978). Snow and Ninio (1986) have described storybook reading as an important source of communication development, where participants engage in a social interaction where both oral and literate uses of language are learned. Within parent-child storybook reading events, language is used to learn to talk about objects, actions, and events, to reflect upon the experiences of the characters, to draw upon personal experience in order to generate interpretations of the text, and to examine print and the conventions of written language. In particular, the use of illustrations in storybooks can offer children with limited language a vehicle for understanding and interpreting experience, establishing connections between personal experience and the events depicted within the illustrations. Thus, interactive storybook reading with young children provides a context in which the collaborative knowledge and experiences of all participants can be shared in the active process of reconstructing the author's meaning,

resulting in the generative use of existing language and the acquisition of new language.

While the value and use of interactive reading with illustrated literature is well established for young children, this type of reading event has not been widely utilized beyond the primary grade levels as a means of enhancing learning and creating a literacy learning environment. Virtually no research exists that provides information or descriptions of this approach with middle school students, either in whole class or small group settings. By using illustrated literature in a small-group reading event, a teacher/mediator can provide a situational context for observing at-risk middle school students' talk about a story. In order to capture the effects and usages of the multiple influences of text and illustrations within the social context, a semiotic perspective may be adopted.

A Semiotic Perspective

The interactive reading event using illustrated literature has multiple, intersecting symbol systems. These symbol systems can offer insights into the nature of texts and the processes related to literate discourse. Golden and Gerber (1990) explored the nature of illustrated storybook reading with second grade children. They provided a model for interpreting the illustrated

storybook reading event from a semiotic perspective, and analyzed the process of constructing the story in the context of the classroom using this model. What follows are theoretical constructs from semiotic theory that contribute to a theory of narrative discourse and further the exploration of interactive reading events.

The Text

In Golden and Gerber's (1990) model of the illustrated storybook reading event, the entire illustrated story, comprised of a picture and written text, exists as a symbol. The meaning of this symbol is influenced by both the author and illustrator who generated the story in order to share meaning. The illustration presents an iconic representation of meaning, communicating information about the objects, characters, actions, and states. The written text presents primarily symbolic representations, specifying through words those elements of the story that the author chooses to identify, and the relationships that are held between them. Indexical representations also are found, both in the illustrations, where the image suggests something other than what is depicted (e.g., dark clouds = rain), or in words such as pronouns or other cohesive ties that refer to information through temporary association rather than lexical meaning.

The relationship that exists between the pictures and the words constitutes the narrative. This relationship forms the symbol, where the meaning is generated simultaneously from verbal and visual cues along a continuum from a close to a distanced relationship. The picture and text work together to limit the range of possible interpretations to assure that meaning will be shared between author and reader. Together the picture and text specify which elements are to be signified within the symbol.

A close relationship exists when the text and illustration closely match. The iconic representation of the story in the picture closely corresponds to the meaning communicated in the text. For example, one illustration in the book **Two Bad Ants** (Van Allsburg, 1988) shows an ant moving into an ant tunnel holding a large white crystal in its jaws. The accompanying text reads: "The news traveled swiftly through the tunnels of the ant world. A scout had returned with a remarkable discovery--a beautiful sparkling crystal." Both text and illustration are closely united in their depiction of ant, tunnel, crystal and jaws.

A distanced relationship (Picture-to-Text) exists when the illustration serves as an interpretant of the text and depicts things beyond those written about. The

illustrator presents inferences that add meaning not specified in words. For example, a page in **Two Bad Ants** reads: "When the ants came out of the tunnel they found themselves in a strange world. Smells they had known all their lives, smells of dirt and grass and rotting plants, had vanished. There was no more wind and, most puzzling of all, it seemed that the sky was gone." The picture presented an illustration of a partial inside kitchen wall suggesting a skyscraper, providing an interpretation of where the ants had found themselves.

A distanced relationship (Text-to-Picture) also may exist when the text serves as an interpretant of the picture, and limits the range of possible interpretations. One illustration in **Two Bad Ants** shows the ants walking along a path, with very tall grass growing all around them in an environment devoid of light. The text reads: "More than once the line of ants stopped and anxiously listened for sounds of hungry spiders. But all they heard was the call of crickets echoing through the woods like distant thunder." The text provided a context for interpreting the darkness, and extended the symbol to include sounds, emotional states, and potential future events that were not available from the illustration.

Both verbal and visual cues operate concurrently as a distinctive kind of symbolic relationship to initiate

meaning in illustrated literature. Golden and Gerber (1990) point out that the relationship between words (symbol) and image (icon) varies depending upon the author and illustrator. Their model is conceived to capture the total text, words and pictures, during the unfolding of the interactive reading event.

The Interpretant

The illustrated story exists as a symbol, but it grows in meaning and differs in interpretation in accord with the experiences and the knowledge that the interpreters bring to the situation. The symbol is thus different for each participants' interpretant and changes continuously as new information is added to the interpretation or as new insights are generated. The meaning that the interpretants bring will depend upon the knowledge or background that is used to interpret the text at any moment within the interaction, and the information that the interpreters consider important at any given moment. This is a multidimensional and integrated process that is influenced by the stimuli presented, the personal experiences of the interpreters, the social context in which their interpretants take place, the community and world knowledge possessed by the interpreters, and the attitudes or beliefs held by the interpreters. Golden and Gerber (1990) specified five different patterns of focus

that could be used to interpret the meaning of the text, as delineated below:

1. Attention to the illustration occurs when the comment provided by a participant closely matches the information that is available in the illustration. The meaning could be derived solely from the picture, and may even contradict information provided within the text.
2. Attention to the text occurs when the comment provided by a participant directly reflects information that is not readily observable from the iconic representation of the illustration, but rather incorporates information that was presented symbolically in the written text.
3. Attention to the illustration and text mixed occurs when comments incorporate information presented in the text, but go beyond the text and incorporate information suggested by the illustration.
4. Attention to the story mediated through personal experience occurs when the comments go beyond the information presented in the text and incorporate some topic relevant information that reflects the child's personal experience.

5. Attention to the story mediated through world knowledge occurs when the comments go beyond the information presented in the text and incorporate information that reflect historical events, scientific facts, reference to current events, or other aspects of world knowledge.

Mediation of the Interpretation

When the illustrated story symbol is embedded in a social event, then symbolization is affected by a social process. The symbol only exists in response to meaning that is shared between participants. Group reading sessions constitute one context of social mediation, where the participant readers influence the dynamic, progressive development of the symbol for each of the interpreters.

Many forms of mediation can be observed within the illustrated story reading event. The adult provides one source of mediation, offering instructional cues as described above. But the participant readers in the group also serve to mediate meaning through their verbal and nonverbal interactions. Observable acts of mediation may occur, either at the level of the index or the symbol.

Mediation that occurs at the level of the index occurs when an object is referred to through indication or association rather than symbolization. For example, a participant may physically move away from an aversive

situation rather than comment upon it. A point or a gesture may be used to describe some element of the story, rather than words.

Mediation that occurs at the level of the symbol occurs when the sign bears a close relationship between that which is signified and the words used to represent them. The symbol includes labels of elements within the illustration, descriptions of perceived actions, states, or consequences, and other types of superficial interpretation.

Symbols may also bear a distanced relationship between that which is signified and the words used to represent them. They include conclusions or syntheses drawn through integration of multiple significants, evaluations or judgements generated in response to an event or state, and other level interpretation. Symbols bearing a distanced relationship to the text are referred to as pure symbols.

Golden and Gerber (1990) found that by using this model, they were able to describe multiple aspects of the illustrated storybook reading event from the perspectives of the text (i.e., the intrinsic narrative), and the social context of the classroom (i.e., the extrinsic narrative). The analysis revealed insights into the nature of the text itself, and the text events that

occurred and mediated learning within the second grade classroom.

Observing Affective and Intellectual Response

While Golden and Gerber (1990) specified the relationships of meaning inherent in the text, and created within the social context by the storybook reading participants, their analysis largely focused upon the intellectual response to the illustrated literature. Their analysis does not consider the personal, or affective response to the story (Rosenblatt, 1938/1983), the types of interactions that occur between participants which are not story related (Britton, 1970), and the level of abstraction or implicature that the participants use to interpret the text (Monroe, 1951; Blank, Rose, & Berlin, 1978). These aspects of language use and meaning can be incorporated by combining Golden and Gerber's analysis with additional analyses comprised of the categories of discourse defined by Britton (1982), and an adaptation of Monroe's (1951) levels of semantic interpretation.

Three main categories of discourse--poetic, expressive, and transactional (Britton, 1982)--may occur independently or interactively within the context of an event, such as an interactive illustrated story reading. Different functions may occur with changes in participant turns or participant roles.

The Poetic Function

The poetic function is characterized by highly conventionalized and structured uses of language, including narration and poetry. Information conforms to structures such as story grammars. Several types of discourse behaviors may be observed within the poetic function that serve to mediate interpretation of the story:

1. Acknowledgements. Acknowledgements confirm or indicate agreement with the information presented by another participant without adding new information or elaboration. They often occur as a conversational strategy, fulfilling an obligatory turn in the interaction.
2. Comments. Comments state information, frequently adding content, extending, or elaborating upon the previous act. They can be in direct response to a question asked by another participant, or they can be self initiated.
3. Questions. Questions solicit information regarding the content from other participants. They can be used to seek new information, or to clarify information previously stated but not understood.

The Expressive Function

The expressive function relates personal reaction or response to an event or situation. The response may be related to the illustrated story reading, or may occur in response to something else taking place within the context. These responses include the following:

1. Expressives. Expressives convey feelings, emotions, attitudes or other responses in reaction to the content, rather than information about the content.
2. Protests. Protests express objection to the behaviors of others, and are often accompanied by or followed by regulatory acts.

The Transactional Function

The transactional function serves to provide information needed to accomplish goals, or to regulate turns between participants.

These include the following:

1. Regulatory Acts. Regulations organize interactions and control either the conversation or the larger social context. They include requests for objects or actions directed at others, instructions regarding the use of objects or actions, and other acts that are directed at influencing the behavior of others.

2. Rules. Rules state procedures, definitions, or facts that are understood to exist and are applied within a given social context.

Monroe's Semantic Levels

Monroe (1951) and others (Blank, Rose, & Berlin, 1978) indicate that within any context of language use, the same event may be interpreted along a continuum of semantic abstraction. The semantic context reflects (a) the degree to which the meaning communicated within the text is concrete and literal versus abstract and figurative (i.e., perceptual-language distance), and (b) the extent to which the information needed by the reader to interpret the text is explicitly stated versus merely implicitly suggested (i.e., implicature).

The perceptual-language distance (Blank, Rose, & Berlin, 1978) is determined by the interaction between the perceptual characteristics of the referent (e.g., a story illustration), and the level of analysis at which the language user treats this perception. This relationship can be described as an hierarchical arrangement that ranges from a close relationship, where the language labels or names the material or object, to a distanced relationship, where perceptions must be evaluated, judged, and mentally manipulated to determine what may, might, could, or would happen to materials.

At the most basic level of semantic interpretation there is minimal distance between the perception of the referent and the language used to refer to it. At this level, language is used to name or label the referent (i.e., labelling the nightingale as a "bird" or his sound as a "twerp"), and no understanding of the function or purpose of the object named is required. At a level of greater perceptual-language distance, the referent may either be perceived as part of a relationship that exists between itself and other agents or objects, in which case the language is used to describe the relationship (i.e., "The bird is in the cage"), or aspects of the referent that are general features of a variety of agents or objects can be perceived such as color or size, in which case the language is used to describe these abstract properties of the referent (i.e., "The cage is golden").

A more distanced perceptual-language relationship exists when the features of the referent itself only suggest meaning that is inferred by the interpretant. This level of interpreting may impose emotion, causality, temporal, or spatial frames, and is influenced by the interpreter's own experiences and values, such as examining the bird's facial expression in stating "The bird is sad because his feathers are dull". A higher level inference is demonstrated when the interpretation

goes beyond any clues that are provided by or inherent in the perception of the referent itself. The interpretant must use world, cultural, or personal knowledge to infer meaning at this level of perceptual-language distance, as in "The bird will fly away because he feels unwelcome compared to the beautiful mechanical bird".

While the previous levels of semantic interpretation used language to refer to aspects of the referent that were suggested by perceptually present clues, at greater distances the perceptions must be ignored as largely irrelevant and the language takes precedence. For example, at the level of evaluation, a statement such as "True beauty cannot be found in physical appearance" can be used to refer to the moral suggested by seeing the bird fly away and understanding its underlying motivation. This level of language requires the understanding of concepts that are linguistically, rather than perceptually, created. In contrast to words that label, describe, or interpret, words such as "true" or "cannot" have no physical referent and can only be learned by their use in a meaningful context. Their referent is semantically created, and thus they are pure symbols (Nelson, 1985; Pierce, 1955).

The semantic context, or meaning context, is dependent upon the participants' ability to attend to the

relations between words within and across sentences. By activating a network of cultural, scientific, world, historical, literary and linguistic background knowledge, the participants are able to reason and to create abstract meaning. Implicature adds another dimension within the semantic context. This dimension ranges along a continuum from explicit meaning, where the participants' understand what the language says on a factual or literal level, to implicit meaning, where the participants understand what the language means in relation to underlying motives, intentions, cultural or historical knowledge. By way of example, at the level of labelling, the word designates the referent and therefore is the word in the sentence that carries the most important meaning (e.g., That is an emperor). At the level of description, relationships are established between two or more elements, such as subject and an object (e.g., "emperor" and "nightingale"). The word that is critical for interpretation is the verb that designates how the emperor and the nightingale are to be related, as in "The emperor listens to the nightingale," or "The emperor banished the nightingale."

Teacher's Instructional Cues

Martinez and Teale (1989) and Teale, Martinez & Glass (1989) recognize that the teacher's storybook reading style has an effect on children's ways of constructing a

story. Their research highlighted three significant aspects of the teacher's instructional cue style during story reading: (a) the focus of the teacher's talk during the interactive reading experience, (b) the type of information the teacher encouraged students to deal with during the storybook reading, and (c) the teacher's use of instructional strategies to organize and manage interactions.

The discussion of illustrated literature can focus on story features or story-related features. According to Martinez and Teale (1989), story features are those that refer to actual storyline information presented by the author/illustrator. For the purposes of this study the story features are those designated by Golden (1990) (i.e., act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) presented earlier in this chapter. Story-related features are details not considered key information for the storyline (e.g., genre, vocabulary, style, title, connections to other literature, character, illustrator).

A second aspect of teacher reading style is the type of information the teacher encouraged the students to deal with during the interactive reading experience. Five types of information were used: (a) textually explicit (i.e., information made explicit in the words of the text), (b) pictorially explicit (i.e., explicit

information contained in the illustrations), (c) inferential (i.e., attempts to predict change, explain why and how), (d) personal association (i.e., a request or attempt to relate prior personal experiences to textual information), and (e) meta-narrative (i.e., information about the process of illustrated literature reading itself).

A third aspect of the teacher's story reading style is her use of instructional strategies to guide and organize the reading event. Five instructional strategies were identified: (a) eliciting (i.e., takes the form of a question and seeks responses constrained by the text or commonly held world knowledge, (b) informing (i.e., takes the form of a statement or response and refers to messages that supply information), (c) clarifying (i.e., messages meant to seek clarification of apparent confusion), (d) focusing (i.e., a message used to initiate the discussion or an aspect of the discussion), and (e) controlling (i.e., messages concerned with the control of the behavior of the participants).

Research Framework

Golden's (1990; Golden & Gerber, 1990), Britton's (1982), Monroe's (1951), and Martinez and Teale's (1989) research provide a framework to examine the process and nature of interactive reading events using illustrated

literature in the middle school classroom. The semiotic model described by Golden and Gerber (1990) can be used for examining the interactions that occur between the intrinsic structures and motives provided by the text (i.e., the illustrations and the printed words), as well as the extrinsic structures and motives exhibited within the classroom interactions that occur during these illustrated book reading events. Britton's (1982) categories of discourse types can be used to differentially classify affective versus intellectual responses that occur during the process of interpreting the text. Monroe's (1951) levels of semantic interpretation can be used for examining the perceptual-language distance between the participants' perceptions of the illustrated literature and the language used by them to refer to it. Martinez and Teale's (1989) categories of teacher storybook reading style can be used for examining aspects of the teacher's instructional cues provided within the reading event.

The interactive reading context can be evaluated for patterns in participants' interactions. One type of research approach that is sensitive to the observation of interactions and the aspects of the participants' functioning is qualitative research. Following is a

discussion that supports the use of such research for examining small group interactive reading events.

Qualitative Method of Investigation

The use of language in an actual classroom situation, such as an oral discussion of a literature selection, requires the coordination of multiple levels of linguistic complexity. Students must possess facility with complex grammatical and discourse structures, vocabulary that refers to abstract concepts, figurative uses of language requiring multiple levels of interpretation of the same information, the coordination of ideas through the use of complex relational terms and cohesive ties within and across the boundaries of sentences, and inferences drawn from world and cultural knowledge in response to the language. Attempts to assess the actual use of language by at-risk students (Tizard & Hughes, 1984) have failed to capture the interactions between these multiple dimensions of language use.

The majority of research investigating the language of at-risk children has been based upon standardized tests (Weaver, 1989). Both by definition and design, these instruments break language into its smallest components and assess each aspect as a discrete entity. The dynamic relationship between vocabulary, grammar, discourse structure, and interpretations across word and sentence

boundaries are thus lost. Even when language samples have been elicited, the analyses conducted on them have focused upon superficial structures, such as the grammar of the sentences or the elements of story structure that are present. These methods of evaluating language fail to capture the patterns of interaction present within the text, produced by each of the participants, and the mutual effects that occur between the text and the participants (Damico, 1989). This may be because these evaluations originate in and privilege the apparent intentions of authors who are not involved in the actual negotiations of meaning at the sites where they are occurring.

In order to capture these dynamic interactions, language use as it occurs in an actual context must be examined. The language arising in such a context is whole and integrated across sentences and among participants, rather than discrete and isolated. Once collected, the language can be examined from a variety of perspectives in order to glean specific insights. The context in which language sampling occurs influences the quality of the interactions that are obtained. Factors such as the familiarity of the situation and the participants, the relative ages and authority of the participants, the topic of the interaction, the setting in which the interaction takes place including the location and the time of day,

the materials that are discussed, and the purposes or goals of the interaction all affect the language that is produced within a context (Miller, 1981).

Labov's (1972) research described the language produced by Black children as particularly sensitive to many of these variables. The language produced by these and other minority children in contrived situations with unfamiliar researchers is limited and fails to reveal the performance competencies that are exhibited in more authentic settings. Thus, in order to examine the language used by at-risk children in response to literature, it is important that the context in which the language unfolds be as naturalistic as possible. A type of ethnographic method referred to as participant observation is one strategy for minimizing many of the variables that limit language production and ensuring that the language obtained is representative of the children's typical performance.

Participant observation refers to a method of research wherein the investigator is a self-conscious participant in the situation that is under study. That is, the researcher can never simply bracket herself and the consequences of her intervention out of the normal unfolding of any event in which she participates as a researcher. A researcher functions simultaneously as a

participant and as an observer in order to engage in activities appropriate to the situation being studied and to observe the physical and social context in which the event occurs. By functioning as a participant, the researcher becomes a part of the context and therefore is more likely to obtain a more accurate view and understanding of the event. The behaviors that are observed, including the use of language, are likely to be more representative of typical performance as compared to more contrived tasks. The interactions that occur are more natural and spontaneous. While participation allows for open-ended observations to be made, it also enables hypotheses to be developed and tested through direct experience, as well as through indirect sources. Direct experience allows for an examination of behaviors and actions that individuals may not have an explicit awareness of or be able to explicitly talk about (Jacob, 1990).

The level of participation can range from no involvement with the people or activities being studied, through complete participation where the researcher is a natural and ordinarily included participant in the situation. The role of the teacher as researcher is an example of complete participation. The teacher, engaged in real classroom situations, is in a unique position to

ask questions about learning, to collect data from many perspectives and across time, and to interpret these data from an informed perspective (Martin, 1987). The teacher-as-researcher role enables the classroom to be studied as a dynamic process, with knowledge of the individual participants, the classroom routine, the history of interactions across the school year, and other factors contributing to a more complete understanding of the situation and the information that is obtained from observation (Stenhouse, 1985).

Methods of Data Collection

The teacher-as-researcher model represents one type of qualitative research approach that employs investigative methodology and data collection procedures that are naturalistic and descriptive. Inherent in this type of research is an emphasis upon analytical procedures and reflective analysis of the data after they are obtained, with special care observed not to influence the nature or outcome of the data through experimentation (Maxwell, 1990). The analytical procedures used involve collecting and recording data as it occurs within a situation or event, analyzing and synthesizing the data in order to discover regularities and generate explanations, and asking new questions that result from these analyses. The investigation can be conducted in a cyclical manner,

with new questions generated from the original observations that are subsequently investigated through further observation, description, and analysis (Spradley, 1980). Such rigor as is necessary is typically supplied by reference to disinterested parties' interpretations of the events which form the loci of the research.

The purpose of participant observational research is not to test hypotheses that are posed prior to investigation, but rather to generate insights from data. The data may be interpreted in relationship to known categories of behavior, or may be used to derive theoretical categories and propositions from the relationships that are shown to exist among the data. These categories and relationships serve to formulate and reformulate interpretations, resulting in the development, clarification, refinement, and validation of the theory as it evolves within this process (Crago, 1988).

The role of the teacher as researcher is different from that of a traditional experimenter. Rather than functioning as one who manipulates variables in a manner disengaged from the setting, the teacher/researcher, by definition (Stenhouse, 1985), is an active, engaged immersed participant in a particular setting. This immersion entails intensive long-term participation within that setting, careful recording of the events that occur

through field notes and interview notes, documentation using evidence such as artifacts and recordings, and careful reporting of findings by means of detailed (thick, e.g., Geertz, 1973) descriptions, examples, and interpretative commentary (Erickson, 1986).

The goal of participant observer research is different from that of a traditional experiment. Rather than seeking generalizability, the goal of this method is authenticity (Maxwell, 1990). In order to establish authenticity, the investigator must (a) identify a full range of events rather than focusing upon a discrete or narrow dimension of an event, (b) collect recurrent instances of an event, and (c) examine the events at a number of different levels as they exist within the natural setting or social system. The comprehensive view of the situation across multiple instances enables the investigator to evaluate the validity of the observations and interpretations that are formed (Kovarsky & Crago, 1990-1991).

Advantages of Participant Observation Methods

Participant observation, such as that of the teacher as researcher, enables observations to be conducted in naturalistic contexts, rather than contrived situations. Phenomena such as language and communication are culturally and socially situated events, and therefore

should be studied as such (Hymes, 1972). This method also allows the investigation to be approached with an open mind and broad perspective. When a researcher begins with a narrow, predetermined conceptualization of exactly what will be examined under carefully specified conditions, then there is a risk that significant information and contributing factors may be overlooked and/or ignored, even if the research powerfully illuminates precisely the hypotheses it is designed to test. Participant observation further allows a researcher to study complex behaviors and situations. By studying the complex behavior occurring within a real context, and for real purposes, the investigator can begin to understand the interrelationships of multiple variables that interact to result in some behavior or event (Spradley, 1980).

Methods of Analysis

Language, as it is produced within a meaningful context of use, can be examined from a number of complementary perspectives. Much traditional analysis of classroom language has focused on superficial, structurally quantifiable, and implicitly normative aspects of language, such as the average or mean length of the utterances produced, the grammatical structure of the sentences, or the number of elements of story structure presented in a narrative. These types of analysis provide

some insights into facility with language form, but fail to address the issues of meaning, or the quality and depth of the content that is expressed, and purpose, or the uses toward which language is directed in order to accomplish goals within the communicative context. This form of language analysis is largely objective in that individual words within sentences can be counted, and elements of grammar can be observed to be either present or absent in obligatory contexts. On the other hand, analyses of language content and use are more subjective and often must be inferred from the context.

Language in context does not exist within the utterance itself, nor with the speaker of the utterance, nor with the hearer, but rather as a complex interaction between each of these aspects. Thus, the basic unit of communication within a context of use in not a word or a sentence, but rather a speech act (Searle, 1969). The production of the speech act within a context of use accomplishes action, in the manner of transferring information between speaker and hearer (i.e., the propositional act), and in commanding, informing, asking, persuading, or performing other acts of illocution. The effect that the utterance has upon the listener is the perlocutionary act, while the actual form of both the verbal and nonverbal message is the utterance act. All

must be present for the speech act to be complete (Searle, 1969). Speech acts are embedded within some form of discourse, such as a conversation, discussion, debate, or lecture, in which a topic or theme is developed across a series of speech acts. The roles assumed by participants, the patterns of turn taking, and the degree of formality must be established by the speakers within this discourse.

The topic of the discourse exists along a continuum from a highly contextualized to a completely decontextualized context (Snow, 1983). At the most contextualized end of the continuum, language is used to provide information or to comment upon objects or events that are ongoing within the immediate environment. The interaction most often takes place as a dialogue, so that the responsibility for the communication is shared. Thus, the language that is used is often informal, characterized by nonspecific words such as "that" or "it" to refer to things that are observable to all participants, and informal patterns of grammar with frequent use of phrases instead of complete sentences. At the most decontextualized end of the continuum, language is used for purposes of performing mental operations, such as thinking, planning, or reflecting. The information referred to is conceptual instead of observable, including evaluations of situations, or abstract concepts such as

"metamorphosis" or "assimilation." Much of the interaction is characterized by long periods of monologue with a specific goal or purpose. Because little support for the communication is present in the situation or environment, the language that is used must be more formal, with specific vocabulary and complete sentences used to provide sufficient information to the listener (Westby, 1985).

Language produced in a context must be evaluated along all of these dimensions in order to identify the full range of events that are contributing to the interaction, to collect recurrent instances of patterns of language use or interpretation, and to examine the patterns of language at a number of different levels and perspectives. Consistent with the goals of participant observer research, this comprehensive view of the use of language within a context across multiple instances of speech act productions enables the investigator to evaluate the validity of the observations and interpretations that are formed.

Artifact Analysis

One source of data, the illustrated selection, provides a perspective from which language of the text can be evaluated through artifact analysis. Artifacts are things that people make and use, and thus constitute a

permanent product of an event or situation (Spradley, 1980). They may include projects, schedules, plans, or written records of an event such as a book. Artifacts represent the completed part of a process, and therefore provide important insights into the goals and purposes of an activity. For example, the book **Two Islands** (Gantschev, 1985) represents the completed product of the author, who previously had actively engaged in the process of creating a message and attitude about the dangers of industrialization through both illustration and text. Examination of this book, or artifact, can be used to describe the language demands imposed by the author, including the degree of decontextualization, the discourse structures used to develop the story, the types of speech acts and the language used to communicate them, and the ideas or content of the story, including that which is explicitly stated in words and that which is only implied.

Audio and Video Recordings

A second source of data is that of audio and video recordings of the actual context of language use. Recordings provide a record of the process of language use, rather than only the completed product (Mehan, 1979). The dynamic interactions between the participants can be observed for their reciprocal effects, including turn-taking strategies, the amount and type of support provided

by the context, the communication goals of the participants, the content of the messages, the verbal and nonverbal strategies used to communicate the information, and the degree of shared responsibility for the communication. In order to minimize the effects of introducing recording equipment into a naturalistic setting, and thus eliciting atypical patterns of interaction, the recording devices should be present as a regular part of the events to be observed for an extended time period prior to the dates of actual data collection. When used as a meaningful and inherent part of the activity or situation, the equipment is viewed by participants as a normally occurring and useful tool, resulting in recordings that are a less obtrusive and more valid measure of the event.

For example, within a group literature discussion, the interactions that occur as the author's story is reconstructed by the group can be audio and video recorded. These recordings can be used by the participants to critique their own participation and to seek further insights from the story as a regular part of the classroom routine. The interactions can be used by the observer, or investigator through repeated examinations of the recordings. The information gleaned from sources such as the illustrations, the text, the

comments produced by peers, the teacher, and from outside sources can all be examined for their relative effects upon each other. The amount and type of information communicated that is specific and relevant to the text, versus language used to refer to nontextual information or to regulate the behaviors of others can be observed in order to gain insights into the process of active reconstruction versus passive participation. The occurrences of higher level language uses, such as critical evaluations and interpretations can be observed as they occur in context, for insights into the contextual factors that contribute to these events.

Research Questions

A qualitative research approach employing the teacher as researcher model of participant observation was used to examine the language used by at-risk middle school children in the context of an interactive discussion of literature. The language demands presented by the illustrations and the text of the book were examined in relationship to the language used by the students as they engage in small group discussion for purposes of interpreting and reconstructing the author's message. The role of the teacher was examined for the effects upon the group dynamics. There were five questions that guided this study, each specifically addressing at-risk middle

school children as participants in small group interactive reading events:

1. What aspects of the text and illustrations in illustrated literature influence students' meaning-making during interactive reading events?
2. How do personal experiences and world/cultural knowledge influence these students' meaning-making from illustrated literature?
3. What semantic levels of language do these students use to express their meaning-making of illustrated literature?
4. What functions of discourse, both story related and non-story related, do these students use within interactive reading events?
5. How does the role assumed by the teacher influence these students' meaning-making from illustrated literature?

CHAPTER III

EXAMINING A LITERATE DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

Method

Setting and Participants

School

The research was set in a large urban public middle school, accommodating 616 students in the sixth (31%), seventh (37%) and eighth (32%) grades. The student body included: (a) 62% females and 38% males, and (b) 75% African American, 23% White, and 2% Hispanic or Asian students. The school's socioeconomic status (SES) ranged from low-middle to low when defined by the number of students who participated in the free (79%) and reduced (6%) lunch programs. In addition, nearly 50% of the students met the eligibility requirements for severely impoverished family status; these students also received free breakfast on a daily basis. Gender, race/ethnicity, and SES were proportionate across grades. This middle school served 17 different inner-city and suburban elementary schools in the metropolitan area. Of the student body, 88% were transported by school buses, with a disproportionate number of African American students (85% of that racial group) in this category.

Class

The study took place in my sixth-grade classroom with 21 students (from a group of 27 students that began fall semester). They were selected by the middle school's administration to participate in a three-hour, integrated curricula block designed with the intention of encouraging intellectual growth and a greater interest in learning through social interaction. The school administrators' primary criterion for student selection was poor academic achievement (i.e., previously failed grade(s), low standardized test scores, and fifth- or sixth-grade teacher recommendation). The administrators and I felt that these students might achieve greater academic success within a learning environment that facilitated and promoted peer collaboration.

The curricula block for this class integrated reading, English, and social studies during a three-hour period in the morning, from 8:25 a.m. until 11:05 a.m. In addition, these 21 students were also enrolled in art as their first hour elective course from 7:25 a.m. to 8:20 a.m. In the afternoons, they were enrolled in regularly scheduled math, science, and physical education courses.

Students. The students were similar to the school population in terms of gender and SES: (a) 13 females and 8 males, and (b) 14 students in the free lunch program

(who also received free breakfasts) and 2 students in the reduced lunch program. The racial/ethnic balance of this class varied from the school population, with 10 African American, 8 White, 2 Hispanic, and 1 Asian. (The original class of 27 students had been proportionate, but attrition, specifically family relocation, had reduced this number to 21 students within the first three months of the school year.) Academic achievement was low for each student: (a) 15 of the 21 students had failed at least one grade, and (b) standardized test scores ranged one to five years below grade level (California Achievement Test, 1986). These students represented a cross-section from 14 elementary schools throughout the urban and suburban areas of the city. Teacher. As a 41-year-old White female, I have been teaching for 18 years, seven years in high school and 11 years in middle school. My educational background includes an undergraduate degree in business education with a minor in history, a master's degree in curriculum and instruction with a minor in history, and doctoral coursework in reading and communication disorders. My areas of certification includes business education, reading, and social studies.

I had been teaching sixth-grade at this middle school for four years. For the first two years, I taught in a traditional departmentalized program with a new group of

students each period. For the second two years, I taught in the integrated curricular block which involved a three-hour period; the present research was conducted during the second year. During this year, I was with the sixth-grade class during the first half of each school day. For the first hour, I participated with the students in the elective art class. For the next three hours, I functioned as the classroom teacher in the integrated English, reading, and social studies block.

Integrated Block

The curriculum for the integrated block centered around interdisciplinary unit themes (Gamberg, Kwak, Hutchings & Altheim, 1988; Strickland, 1989; Watson, 1987) which comported with the State sixth-grade curricula requirements for English, reading, and social studies. For example, the theme of "Ancient Cultures" was foregrounded, with supporting text selections addressing the three content areas considered and selected. By clustering curricula skills, task requirements, and talk structures, each theme was developed and coordinated by myself and the art teacher for the four-hour period.

Basal text series for the three content areas were not used because of the thematically integrated approach to the block. Instead, illustrated trade books (narrative and expository), as well as videos, slides, and cultural

artifacts, were provided by myself, my art colleague, the school librarian, and the local public librarian as instructional materials for the program. Further, the culture of the classroom was designed to incorporate some of the literacy events of home/community into the academic agenda. For example, some social activities included making lists for library events or shopping trips, relating stories, sharing information through presentations, and conducting small-group meetings.

In addition, I strived to treat my students as active language learning individuals by creating a supportive classroom environment for students to acquire language and literacy behaviors. I listened to and observed my students' use of language in the classroom, on the campus, in the community, and at home. I encouraged reading and writing throughout the class by providing my students opportunities and materials to participate in individual and group experiences of both formal and informal uses of written language. Little emphasis was placed on such traditional concerns as "correct" reading or writing; rather, I encouraged each student's attempts at problem solving in such areas as a better way to express an idea or a more complete orthographic representation of a word. In this environment, I was able to construct my role and

presence as a natural and ordinarily included member of the classroom community.

Interactive reading events. One component of the integrated program in which all students participated during each theme implementation was small group interactive illustrated literature reading events. The small groups usually included four to six students, so that I met with approximately six different groups to read the same selection. The reading materials consisted of an illustrated storybook, chosen primarily for its salience to the unit theme. Although the small group met for only one shared reading, members were encouraged to borrow the illustrated selection and reread it individually or together during their free reading time.

My major purposes of these reading events included affective and intellectual aspects. That is, by forming a small group interactive social situation, I hoped to encourage students' talk and sharing of their thoughts and ideas. In addition, by using illustrated literature within the reading event, I sought to encourage their understanding of storyline and character development as well as their perceptions of how these story components related to their own lives. Given these purposes and practices, using illustrated literature within a small group reading event was the focus of the present study.

Research Participants

Participating in the two interactive illustrated literature reading events were myself and six students chosen from the integrated curricular block. The students included: (a) five females and one male, and (b) three African Americans, one White, one Hispanic, and one Asian. The original attempt had been to balance gender and race/ethnicity; however, the majority of males were reluctant to participate in a research situation.

Materials

Materials for the study were chosen on the basis of a developed theme, Community and Society, negotiated by myself and the art teacher. The theme was designed to assist students to recognize the customs and lifestyles of a wide variety of cultures, including the culture of their own classroom literate discourse community. During this three-month theme cycle, the students were engaged in study of different types of communities, that is, discovering what makes an individual member thrive within a community and how the specific community fits within a larger societal environment.

Two illustrated literature selections supporting this theme were used for the study's small group interactive readings. Van Allsburg's (1988) **Two Bad Ants** was chosen to develop the notion of community. Gantschev's (1985)

Two Islands was selected to reinforce the theme of society, its strengths and its ills. For both books the author was also the illustrator. I had used these illustrated selections in previous years with a similar student population and had found them successful in stimulating the students to talk and share ideas, as well as in exploring characters, storylines and themes.

Two Bad Ants

This literature selection focuses on a community of ants and their desire to gather sugar crystals to satisfy the appetite of their queen. On a particular trip to the sugar bowl, two ants realize an opportunity, stay behind, and devour many of the remaining crystals for themselves. Because they have entered a human's home, the two ants become unwitting participants in a human's morning breakfast routine of coffee with sugar and toasted English muffins. Physically battered from being stirred in coffee, toasted in a toaster, pummeled and pelted in the garbage disposal, and shocked by electricity, the two ants find a safe place and succumb to sleep. They are eventually awakened by the familiar sound of their fellow ants' footsteps coming for more crystals and return to the ant community "where they were meant to be" (p. 31).

This is an 8" x 11" book, with 27 pages of text and illustrations. While there is some text on each page, the

illustrations are on a single page (19 pages) or on two-page spreads (8 pages). According to the art teacher, Van Allsburg particularly focussed on color contrasts (e.g., light and dark shades of purple), lines and stipling (i.e., dotting of lines), and hatching (i.e., lines drawn in one direction) to create illusions of moving through time and space. While the illustrations are representational, they are drawn from the perspective of the ants, rather than the perspective of the person reading the text.

Two Islands

In this literature selection, the author uses the opportunity to compare and contrast two types of society: (a) Greenel, an agrarian society with a developed environmental sense, and (b) Graynel, an industrialized society without such environmental consciousness. The leader of Graynel, recognizing his population's need for a pristine vacation respite, proposes that Graynel and Greenel be connected by a bridge so that Greenel is accessible to his people. Greenel's leader refuses the proposition and Graynel's leader prepares for war against them. The story ends as Graynel falls into the sea from overindustrialization, leaving future societies to ponder the cause of its downfall.

This is an 8" x 11" book, with 28 pages of text and illustrations. A majority of illustrations (12) were presented on two-page spreads (24 pages), with text present on one of the two pages. The four remaining pages had illustrations on each page, while two of these pages also contained text. According to the art teacher, Gantschev particularly focussed on contrast of color and water color technique to create an optical vibration. For Graynel, the overindustrialized island, he uses dull gray, cool tones with controlled hard edge geometric shapes. For Greenel, he uses more pure intense colors in a loose free form with soft edges. The illustrations are representational and are drawn from the perspective of the reader.

Procedure

Reading Events

Two interactive book readings took place during the regular integrated-curricula block in the classroom. Each session began at 8:25 a.m. and ended at 9:15, lasting approximately 45 minutes per session. The two readings occurred six days apart during the final two weeks of the school year. Both readings were video- and audio-taped. For the first book reading, there were three video cameras and one tape recorder. For the second book reading, there were two video cameras and three tape recorders.

Reading group arrangement. The six participating students and I conducted the two interactive story readings at a circular table within the classroom context. The table was placed near the south wall of the classroom with two moveable boards, one on the west and one on the north, used as room dividers. For the first reading the members were seated clockwise in the following configuration: myself, Orna, Tin, Evita, Carlene, Ann, and Liza (real names are not used). I sat with my back to the north room divider. Video cameras were placed in position to represent perspectives: from Liza's, Ann's, and my perspective; from Carlene's and Evita's perspective; and from Orna's and Tin's perspective. The two tape recorders were placed on the table.

The seating arrangement for the second reading event, still clockwise, differed slightly: myself, Ann, Orna, Tin, Evita, Liza, and Carlene. I sat with my back to the north room divider. Only two video cameras were used and again were placed to represent perspectives: from Carlene's, Liza's and my perspective, and from Evita's, Tin's, Orna's and Ann's perspective. Two tape recorders were placed on the table and one on a chair near the table.

For both readings I displayed the books, facing the students in a manner that made them visible to all

participants throughout the discussion. The books were available to participants to point out details within the illustrations or the written text that were significant to the discussion.

Teacher role. I functioned in my normal role as a mediator, facilitating interpretation of the illustration and the written text. I provided assistance to the students, helping them to attend to salient elements or events, asking questions that focus upon unexplored ideas, and providing comments that assist students to expand and elaborate upon their observations. Generally, I followed the same format for each page of the book: (a) first, I encouraged the students to look at the illustrations and to talk about what they saw and what might occur in the story; (b) next, I read the text aloud with the illustrations facing the students; (c) then, I encouraged interaction among the students, for example, providing information, eliciting comments, and clarifying responses; and (d) finally I initiatiated affective discussions that included students' responses to whether they liked the book, would recommend it to their friends, and would read it again.

At the outset of the reading I stressed to the students that my purpose and expectations for the reading were embodied in these ideas: (a) that by constructing the

storyline and the characters' roles we would understand more about our literate discourse community theme, and (b) that by making meaning together we would come to understand more about our roles within our own community. I made decisions regarding the rate at which the discussion progressed based upon the quality of the interactions during a discussion period. For example, when students had few insights and engaged in topic termination, topic shifts, or off task interactions, I provided more direct assistance, directing attention to important information or suggesting experiences or knowledge that may be relevant to the current topic. When students spontaneously generated ideas and information, I reacted in ways that acknowledged and encouraged further elaboration in less directive ways, allowing students to negotiate topics and organize information (Golden & Gerber, 1990).

Student role. The students functioned in their roles as intimate participants in the two interactive book readings. I requested my students to use both illustrations (icons) and text (symbols) to predict, generate, and negotiate meaning construction/reconstruction during the reading episodes. The students were invited to offer interpretations, predictions, and evaluations about the unfolding stories.

They were encouraged to build on each others' verbal interactions through elaboration of their own meaning-making process as to how these illustrated literature selections related and connected to their lives.

Analysis

Three primary analyses were conducted to address the research questions. First, the two literature selections were evaluated for the information intrinsic to the text and illustrations (Golden, 1990). Second, the students' reading event interactions were evaluated for (a) the function and purpose of discourse, including both meaning making and non-meaning making utterances (Britton, 1970); (b) the different patterns of focus used in meaning making, including those mediated through personal experience (adapted from Golden, 1990); and (c) the level of language used to express meaning (Monroe, 1951; Norris & Hoffman, in press). Third, my role was evaluated for instructional cues that occurred in the reading events (Martinez & Teale, 1989; Teale, Martinez, & Glass, 1989).

Intrinsic Analysis

The illustrated literature analysis was conducted collaboratively by myself as the teacher/researcher and a second trained researcher in order to examine elements intrinsic to the text. The primary purpose was to obtain information concerning the text and the illustrations that

could be used when examining the students' reading event interactions. Each page or two-page spread of the two selections was examined as a unit of analysis to identify the five characteristics described by Golden (1990), including: (a) the act, or the plot(s), (b) the agents, or the characters; (c) the scene, or the situation in which the act occurs, (d) the purpose, or the reasons the act took place, and (e) the agency, or the medium or narrative discourse.

For the purposes of this study, the last characteristic, agency, was emphasized in the analysis as it focuses on verbal and visual cues, the primary components of meaning making in illustrated literature. Specifically, the words and pictures were examined according to three possible relationships: (a) A Close Relationship--text and illustration closely match so that the illustrations are redundant to the text; (b) A Distanced Relationship (picture to text)--the illustration depicts ideas that extend beyond the information provided by the text and that are important to the interpretation of the story; or (c) A Distanced Relationship (text to picture)--the text reveals information that is not observable in the illustrations and that is important to the interpretation of the story.

Extrinsic Analysis-Students

The analyses of the students' interactions were conducted by myself and one of two trained researchers, based on my transcriptions of the video- and audio-tapes. These transcriptions included the moment by moment focal point (illustration or text), the speaker's responses, and notes related to the location of the equipment and its operators. The second researcher and I began analyses by independently identifying the message units (MU) (Green & Wallat, 1981; Teale, Martinez, & Glass, 1989) spoken by each participant during both reading events. MU was regarded as the smallest unit of conversational meaning defined in terms of its source, form, purpose, and level of comprehension (Green & Wallat, 1981). Percentage of agreement for identification of MU's was .91 for **Two Bad Ants** and .93 for **Two Islands.**

Discourse Analysis

In order to indicate the purpose and function of the students' talk within this situational context, each MU was classified according to communicative characteristics of discourse (Britton, 1976). These categories included: (a) poetic, an intellectual response that was related to the story, (b) expressive, an affective response that may or may not have been related to the story, or (c) transactional, a regulatory response used to direct either

instructional information (expository information) or story-reading behaviors that also may or may not have been related to the story. When the second researcher and I compared our findings, percentage of agreement was .95 for **Two Bad Ants** and .94 for **Two Islands.**

Interpretant Analysis

In order to represent the meaning-making responses elicited during the reading events, each MU was classified according to the interpreter's different patterns of focus (Golden, 1990). These categories of extrinsic narrative included: (a) attention to the illustration, (b) attention to the text, (c) attention to the illustration and text mixed, (d) attention to the story mediated through personal experience, and (e) attention to the story mediated through world and cultural knowledge. In addition, a sixth category, other, was added (for **Two Islands**) for non-discursive interactions such as minor squabbles or "turf battles" that were unrelated to the story and thus not directly involved with meaning making. Based on my evaluations and those of the third researcher, percentage of agreement was .97 for **Two Bad Ants** and .90 for **Two Islands.**

Level of Language Analysis

The final analysis focused on the semantic context which reflects the degree to which the students

communicated their meaning within the situational context (Monroe, 1951; Norris & Hoffman, in press). In a hierarchical pattern, these categories included: (a) labelling (wholes, parts), (b) describing (actions, characters), (c) interpreting (emotion, cause, temporal/spatial frames), (d) inferencing (predicting, explaining), and (e) evaluating (summarizing, judging, moralizing). In conjunction with the patterns of focus described above, a sixth category, other, was added for the non-discursive utterances. When the third researcher and I compared our findings, percentage of agreement was .93 for **Two Bad Ants** and .97 for **Two Islands.**

Extrinsic Analysis-Teacher

The last analysis examined my role as teacher in mediation of the interpretation of the illustrated texts through instructional cues (Teale, Martinez, & Glass, 1989). For instructional cues, the third researcher and I independently reviewed each of my teacher-MUs in three main areas: (a) what my talk focused on, (b) the type of information I discussed, and (c) the main strategies I used to direct the interactive reading.

Focus of talk. This area included two categories of focus: (a) story features and (b) story-related features. Story features refer to actual information presented by the author and/or illustrator that advances or elaborates

upon the story line, such as setting, initiating event, internal response, etc. Story-related features refer to non-story line elements such as genre, author, illustrator, theme, and connections between the book being read and other texts.

Types of information. This area centered on what information I chose to present to the students. It included six types: (a) textually explicit, (b) pictorially explicit, (c) inferential (text- or reader-based), (d) personal association, and (e) meta (information about the concept of narrative or narrative reading).

Strategies. This area dealt with how I guided the discussions. It includes seven types: (a) eliciting information, (b) directly giving information, (c) clarifying information, (d) focusing on particular information, and (e) controlling (messages concerning the behavior of the participants).

For **Two Bad Ants**, percentage of agreement between the third researcher and myself was: (a) .91 for focus of talk, (b) .95 for types of information, and (c) .91 for strategies. For **Two Islands**, percentage of agreement was .89, .97, and .90, respectively.

Synthesis and Interpretation of the Data

The primary focus of the analysis was the interactions that occurred during the reading of two illustrated books. The intrinsic structures and motives of the text, including the words, illustrations, and development of the story, were studied in relation to the extrinsic structures and motives of the classroom setting in which the reading of the text was embedded. Information from the recordings was used to draw inferences regarding the interpretations of the text made by the students, to identify the amount and type of background knowledge that the students used to interpret the text, to comment upon the social interactions that functioned within the group that both facilitated and limited interpretations of the text, and to observe the mediation that occurred in the context of the book reading events.

An adaptation of the ethnographic procedure of recursively asking questions, collecting and recording data, and analyzing and synthesizing the data was used in order to discover the language demands imposed on at-risk middle schoolers and how these students used their language to accommodate these demands. The data were searched for patterns of language in use in order to

generate explanations concerning the process and nature of the learning and communication that occurred within this context.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIBING INTERACTIVE READING EVENTS

Introduction

My primary purpose in conducting this research was to study the intrinsic elements of the text in relation to the extrinsic elements of the interactive reading events. The findings for **Two Bad Ants** and **Two Islands** are presented separately, following the same format. First, the results of the intrinsic analysis are given in relation to the terms of the pentad: (a) act, (b) agents, (c) scene, (d) purpose, and (e) agency. Next, the results of extrinsic analysis are presented. Because the two literature selections required both text and illustrations to present the stories, the results are framed by the type of text-to-illustration relationship: (a) close, (b) distanced (picture-to-text), and (c) distanced (text-to-picture). Within each text-to-illustration relationship, the students' interactions and my instructional cues are described. Excerpts from the transcriptions used to illustrate the participants' actual language are presented in standard English spelling; however, the syntax of these utterances is presented in its original form. In addition, tables are included that present: (a) the students' language categorized by function of discourse,

patterns of focus, and levels of language, and (b) my instructional cues categorized by focus of talk, types of information, and strategies used. Finally, I outline patterns that emerged from the data, focusing on the relationships between the intrinsic and extrinsic elements.

Two Bad Ants

Intrinsic Findings

The first analysis was conducted on the interactive reading of **Two Bad Ants**, examining the five dimensions of the pentad.

Act

The act, or the plot of this story, consists of an overall plotline. That is, a group of worker ants leave the safety of the tunnel in search of sugar crystals, embark on a long and dangerous journey through a yard and into a house, find the sugar and return to the colony, concluding that home, with its hard work and routine existence, is the best environment. Embedded within this overall plot are a series of episodes, each of which recounts the experiences of two members who left the group for an easier life, only to encounter danger and mishap. Thus, the story structure is complex, with a series of episodes that each are complete within themselves. Specifically, for each embedded episode, the ants find

themselves in a new and life threatening situation, set a goal for escaping, engage in actions designed to reach the goal, and receive consequences for these actions that place them in a new situation. Ultimately, these merge with the overall plotline to create the resolution or moral that home is best.

Agents

The agents, or characters of this story, consist of (a) two minor characters that create the overall initiating events and goals of the plot, (b) an undifferentiated group of worker ants, and (c) two major characters that are used to convey the lesson to be learned or the moral of the story as expressed within embedded episodes. The minor characters of the overall plot include the queen ant, who is important because her request for more sugar crystals serves as the initiating force that sends the worker ants in search of food, and the ant scout, who initially finds the sugar crystals and subsequently leads the group of worker ants back to the source for more crystals. The actions and emotional responses to events produced by the worker ants during the journey are described as a group, without referral to or development of individual characters.

The primary characters of the story are developed within the embedded episodes, consisting of two worker

ants who stray from the group and encounter a series of life endangering events. Their characters initially are presented as an undifferentiated part of the larger group, but once they leave the group they become characterized as independent and self-indulgent, until they finally learn through the consequences of their actions the benefits of group membership.

Scene

The plot of the story involves several changes in location across a relatively short time period of approximately two days. The action for the overall plot begins in the ant tunnel, where the important action takes place in the queen's chamber, and then moves outside of this tunnel to the journey across the yard, up the outside wall of the house, and into the kitchen, and then back toward the tunnel. The embedded episodes begin as the search party begins the journey back, with each episode characterized by a change of scene within the kitchen from the sugar bowl, to the coffee cup, then the bread, the toaster, the disposal, and finally the electrical outlet. The embedded episodes and the overall plotline reunite as the worker ants return to the kitchen, and the two bad ants rejoin the group for the journey back to the tunnel.

The scene is often established abstractly, told from the perspective of the ants. For example, the grass

through which the ants' walk is described as a tall forest, a firefly encountered is identified as lighting the sky with a blue-green flash, and the wall of the house is described as a mountain peak.

Purpose

The purpose refers to the goals or intentions underlying the actions of the characters. The ant scout's goal is to find a source of food and then to lead worker ants to that source. The goal of the ant colony is to feed the queen, and they will subject themselves to many perils for her benefit. The queen ant's goal is to acquire more sugar crystals for food in order to maintain the colony. The two bad ants who stray from the group do so because of greed and the desire to eat the sugar crystals themselves. Within each of the subsequent episodes, their goal becomes escaping a life threatening situation. Their final goal is to rejoin the group and to conform to the rules of the community.

Agency

The agency is the medium, or in this case narrative discourse, that is presented through both text and illustration. The author/illustrator's internal story agency is the sugar crystal. As the controlling agent, the author/illustrator represents the agents' internal goals through their unrelenting search for sugar crystals.

For the purposes of this study, the second level of agency is used. That is, the three text-to-illustration relationships were employed. Analysis of **Two Bad Ants** demonstrated that only four pages maintained a Close Relationship (e.g., the illustration depicts an ant holding a crystal while entering a tunnel; the text refers to an ant scout, a crystal, and tunnels). These included the first actual page of the story, a second page at the beginning, and two near the end of the story.

The majority of the pages held Distanced Relationships between the pictures and the text. Thirteen pages maintained a Picture-to-Text Relationship (e.g., the illustration depicts a brick wall; the text refers to the ants perceiving a mountain ahead of them). This relationship occurred regularly (i.e., at least every two pages) throughout the story. Eleven pages maintained a Text-to-Picture Relationship (e.g., the illustration depicts one ant in some type of liquid; the text tells of a whirlpool sucking the ants deeper and deeper, the ants holding their breath, gasping for air, and spitting out mouthfuls of water). While half of these relationships were found in the beginning and middle of the story, half were found at the end of the story.

Extrinsic Findings

The interactive event took place within the classroom community three-hour block and continued uninterrupted for forty-three minutes. Toward the end of the reading event a school bell sounded signalling the end of class for students attending regular school classes. The ringing bell may have affected the students' responses and the teacher's questioning strategies at the end of the story.

The process of reconstructing the narrative as it occurred within the interactive reading event reflected an integration of the act, agents, scene, purpose, and agency, and the results reported below maintain this integration. In order to examine the participants' responses to the illustration, text, and their interaction, the results were organized according to those pages holding a Close Relationship versus those holding a Distanced Relationship, either Picture-to-Text or Text-to-Picture.

Close Relationship

The analysis of the four pages with this relationship generally revealed that the students attended to the illustrations in the book, as well as their personal knowledge, and generally demonstrated their level of understanding by using language to label and describe

objects in the illustrations (Table 1). As the mediator, I generally maintained a story-related focus, as reflected in my integrated use of meta-narrative, personal association, and inferential information (Table 2).

At the beginning of the story (Table 1, pp. 4, 6), the students primarily used transactional discourse that regulated expository information, while my mediation attempts focused on story-related features establishing the process of interactive story reading (Table 2, pp. 4, 6). First, the students focused their attention on items salient in the illustrations. Their semantic level of language was directed at labelling specific items pictures (e.g., "Them little diamonds;" "A salt crystal;" "It's an ant bite thing") and describing things (e.g., the crystal: "Maybe that's her egg;" the tunnel: "That's like a tunnel and he building up that they digging up his"). In response I attempted to encourage the students' use of other levels of language through teacher questioning (e.g., "Is he [ant scout] taking it somewhere out of the tunnel?"); however, the students continued to interact through concrete responses (e.g., "Yeah;" "Innn").

In addition, the students tended to use their personal knowledge to interpret the story. For example, in responding to the ant queen eating a "beautiful sparkling crystal," the students recognized that she was

eating something (e.g., "Something that they like to eat;" "Something they eat"). When guided by my mediation attempt (i.e., "What might ants like to eat?"), the students continued to use their own experiences to generate an interpretation (e.g., "Bread, people;" "Skin").

In contrast, toward the end of the interactive reading (Table 1, p. 23), the students used poetic discourse to develop a story, while my mediation attempts were story focused and directed at seeking inferential information about the students' developing story. The students used the illustrations, the text, and their world knowledge to construct a story. For example, the illustration, drawn from the perspective of the ants, shows the ants slightly above a slice of bread that they had been hiding on in the toaster. The students generated an interpretation appropriate to understanding the plot (e.g., "It had popped up and they got out"). My mediation attempts using questioning as an eliciting strategy were story focused seeking inferential information (i.e., "Tell me how you think they feel right now?"). The students assumed the ants' perspective and discussed the ants' experience in the toaster (e.g., "[The two ants] don't feel too well, they wish they were at home now").

At the end of the story (Table 1, p. 27), the students used expressive discourse and focused their attention on their own personal knowledge to interpret the story. For example, when the text indicated that the ants "went flying through the air" (implying that this occurred when the toast popped up) and I asked, ""Where do you think they're going to land?", the students were able to make appropriate predictions (e.g.,"Floor," "Counter," "Butter," "Milk," "Glass of water"). Overall, my mediation (Table 2, p. 27) reflected this elicitation of personal association.

Table 1

TWO BAD ANTS: Students' Language (MU's) in a Close Text-Picture Relationship

	Functions of Discourse			Patterns of Focus					Levels of Language				
page# (MU's)	Expres	Trans	Poet	Text	Pict	Text/ Pict	Pers Know	Wrld Know	Label	Desc	Inter	Infer	Eval
p. 4 (26)	.23	.50	.27	.12	.58	.04	.26	.00	.58	.35	.07	.00	.00
p. 6 (39)	.31	.54	.15	.00	.44	.15	.36	.05	.46	.36	.13	.05	.00
p.23 (15)	.27	.13	.60	.06	.27	.33	.06	.28	.14	.26	.20	.40	.00
p.27 (15)	.73	.27	.00	.06	.00	.00	.94	.00	.87	.13	.00	.00	.00

Note. Expres=expressive; trans=transactional; poet=poetic.

Text=text; pict=picture; text/pict=text and picture; pers know=personal knowledge; wrld know=world knowledge.

Label=label; desc=description; inter=interpretation; infer=inference; eval=evaluation.

Table 2

TWO BAD ANTS: Teacher's Instructional Cues (MU's) in a Close Text-Picture Relationship

page# (MU's)	Focus of Talk		Types of Information					Strategies				
	Story	Stry-R	TxtE	PictE	Infer	PersA	Meta	Elct	Infrm	Clarf	Focus	Cont
p. 4 (20)	.15	.85	.00	.10	.20	.10	.60	.35	.05	.50	.10	.00
p. 6 (16)	.31	.69	.06	.18	.24	.18	.34	.38	.12	.32	.18	.00
p.23 (15)	.73	.27	.00	.13	.81	.06	.00	.60	.14	.20	.06	.00
p.27 (8)	.00	1.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00	.00	.25	.25	.50	.00	.00

Note. Story=story features; stry-r=story-related features.

Txte=text explicit; picte=pictorially explicit; infer=inference; persa=personal association; meta=meta narrative.

Elct=elicit; infrm=inform; clarf=clarify; focus=focus; cont=control.

Picture-to-Text Distanced Relationship

When the 13 pages presenting this relationship were examined, the results indicated that the students generally attended to the illustrations, as well as their personal knowledge, using labelling and describing behaviors (Table 3). Throughout these pages, I focused on a mixture of story and story-related information to mediate pictorial, inferential, and meta-narrative information (Table 4).

At the beginning of the story (Table 3, pp. 7, 9), the students focused their attention on the illustrations and their personal and world knowledge, generally labelling and describing objects in the illustrations. This was reflected in their primary use of transactional discourse (i.e., instructive information). For example, in viewing the ants walking through stalks of grass, they described the scene (e.g., "They're still walking"). Similarly, when attending to perceptually salient colors, they chose to use these colors to convey time of day (e.g., "That one's darker than that one;" "It's night there;" "It's probably just getting dark"). My mediation at this point (Table 4, pp. 7, 9) focused on story-related features and the process of story reading (i.e.,"They're still walking. You think they walked from this one [I pointed to the illustration on page 6 and then pointed to

the illustration on page 7] and just continued along the journey?" "Oh, it's getting dark here. Okay").

However, as the students focused their attention on succeeding illustrations (Table 2, pp. 10, 12) and text mixed, and bringing to bear their personal and world knowledge, they labelled and described objects in the illustrations, interpreted their meaning, and inferred what might be happening. This was reflected in their use of all three discourse functions, particularly their increased use of poetic discourse. For example, in viewing a brick wall from the ant search party's perspective, the students recognized the overall plotline by developing the actions of the ant search party in relation to their purpose (e.g., "They're going up on the wall;" "They're like mountain climbing;" "That's where they were going all the time;" "They must have had plans to go there"). My mediation at this point (Table 4, pp. 10, 12) focused on a balance of story and story-related features, types of information sought, and instructional strategies used (i.e., "Where are we [the ant search party]?" "What do you think is happening?" "How do they know to climb this wall?" "They had plans to go there? Had anybody told them about it?").

In contrast, in the middle of the story (Table 3, pp. 13, 15, 16, 18), the students were better able to

coordinate multiple patterns of focus. This was reflected in their increased use of poetic discourse. For example, the students recognized that text ("mountain") from a previous page was really a wall of a house, and that was the ants' destination (e.g., "That's where they got them crystals from, that house right there"). My attempt to request an inference (i.e., "Where are they headed?") elicited students' poetic responses regarding the items sought by the ants (e.g., "To the crystal;" "In the pot").

Toward the end of the book (Table 3, pp. 22, 24), the students reverted to using personal knowledge and expressed this knowledge at the interpretative level. For example, they associated an abstract drawing of a faucet with a sink, although the latter object was not present. Their personal knowledge of the faucet and sink provided the students with information to not only label and describe but also to predict the ants' destination, as well as the next story event (e.g., "[They're] drinking it;" "Then they drowned down into the sink"). At this point I focused on story-related features, using primarily eliciting strategies to obtain a variety of information. Towards the very end of the book (Table 3, p. 29), the students failed to make any comments, while I (Table 4, p. 29) focused on story-related features and controlling types of strategies.

Table 3

TWO BAD ANTS: Students' Language (MU's) in a Distanced Picture-to-Text Relationship

	Functions of Discourse			Patterns of Focus					Levels of Language				
page# (MU's)	Expres	Trans	Poet	Text	Pict	Text/ Pict	Pers Know	Wrld Know	Label	Desc	Inter	Infer	Eval
p. 7 (8)	.50	.25	.25	.00	.50	.12	.38	.00	.12	.88	.00	.00	.00
p. 9 (22)	.36	.55	.09	.18	.27	.00	.50	.05	.59	.36	.05	.00	.00
p.10 (11)	.18	.45	.37	.00	.45	.18	.27	.10	.18	.64	.00	.18	.00
p.12 (22)	.32	.41	.27	.00	.23	.27	.27	.23	.41	.50	.09	.00	.00
p.13 (15)	.13	.27	.60	.00	.40	.13	.40	.07	.66	.27	.07	.00	.00
p.15 (15)	.47	.33	.20	.00	.20	.20	.53	.07	.53	.20	.07	.20	.00
p.16 (12)	.17	.50	.33	.00	.42	.25	.33	.00	.58	.17	.25	.00	.00
p.18 (13)	.38	.46	.16	.00	.08	.31	.61	.00	.23	.23	.54	.00	.00
p.20 (27)	.30	.33	.37	.00	.44	.19	.37	.00	.33	.52	.11	.04	.00

Table 3 (continued)

page# (MU's)	Functions of Discourse			Patterns of Focus					Levels of Language				
	Expres	Trans	Poet	Text	Pict	Text/ Pict	Pers Know	Wrld Know	Label	Desc	Inter	Infer	Eval
p.21 (9)	.11	.89	.00	.00	.44	.00	.34	.22	.89	.00	.11	.00	.00
p.22 (28)	.32	.36	.32	.00	.18	.22	.46	.14	.36	.46	.18	.00	.00
p.24 (26)	.27	42	.31	.00	.15	.23	.54	.08	.38	.35	.23	.04	.00
p.29 (0)	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00

Note. Expres=expressive; trans=transactional; poet=poetic.

Text=text; pict=picture; text/pict=text and picture; pers know=personal knowledge; wrld know=world knowledge.

Label=label; desc=description; inter=interpretation; infer=inference; eval=evaluation.

Table 4

TWO BAD ANTS: Teacher's Instructional Cues (MU's) in a Distanced Picture-to-Text Relationship

	Focus of Talk		Types of Information					Strategies				
page# (MU's)	Story	Stry-R	TxtE	PictE	Infer	PersA	Meta	Elct	Infrm	Clarf	Focus	Cont
p. 7 (9)	.00	1.00	.11	.34	.10	.00	.45	.22	.11	.45	.22	.00
p. 9 (11)	.09	.91	.18	.45	.09	.00	.28	.45	.28	.09	.18	.00
p.10 (9)	.55	.45	.22	.22	.34	.22	.00	.55	.11	.22	.12	.00
p.12 (17)	.47	.53	.00	.06	.41	.24	.29	.24	.24	.41	.11	.00
p.13 (12)	.67	.33	.00	.33	.42	.00	.25	.33	.25	.42	.00	.00
p.15 (8)	.75	.25	.00	.25	.50	.12	.13	.63	.00	.25	.00	.12
p.16 (4)	.50	.50	.00	.25	.25	.25	.25	.50	.00	.25	.25	.00
p.18 (5)	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.60	.20	.20	.40	.40	.20	.00	.00
p.20 (18)	.55	.45	.05	.39	.28	.28	.00	.39	.20	.36	.05	.00

Table 4 (continued)

page# (MU's)	Focus of Talk		Types of Information					Strategies				
	Story	Stry-R	TxtE	PictE	Infer	PersA	Meta	Elct	Infrm	Clarf	Focus	Cont
p.21 (8)	.63	.37	.12	.00	.63	.00	.25	.37	.25	.25	.13	.00
p.22 (18)	.28	.72	.00	.22	.17	.17	.44	.44	.06	.22	.28	.00
p.24 (12)	.33	.77	.00	.25	.33	.33	.09	.50	.09	.16	.16	.09
p.29 (5)	.00	1.00	.00	.20	.00	.00	.80	.00	.40	.00	.20	.40

Note. Story=story features; stry-r=story-related features.

Txte=text explicit; picte=pictorially explicit; infer=inference; persa=personal association; meta=meta narrative.

Elct=elicit; infrm=inform; clarf=clarify; focus=focus; cont=control.

Text-to-Picture Distanced Relationship

When the 11 pages maintaining this relationship were examined, the students showed discourse and focus patterns parallelling those of the Picture-to-Text Distanced Relationship. That is, when the students' used poetic discourse to make meaning for a page where the picture was needed to interpret the text, they generally used the same type of discourse to discuss a succeeding page where the text is needed to interpret the illustration. Accordingly, their levels of language generally ranged from labelling and describing to interpreting and inferencing levels (Table 5). I also appeared to change my mediation of focus and type of information according to the location of the page in the book, although the strategies I used were more consistent (Table 6).

At the beginning of the book (Table 5, pp. 5, 8), the students focused their attention primarily on the illustrations as a source of information, using expressive and transactional discourse in their discussions. They expressed their understanding generally by labelling and describing the objects on the page with some attempts to attribute characteristics and status to these objects. For example, the students established the characters in the story (e.g., "It's a flying ant!" "These are evil ants, hunh?" "That's the queen ant"). In addition, the

students continued to note the time of day aspect pointing out the author/illustrator's use of different dark colors on the page and the objects that were present (e.g., "Why are the ants purple? They don't look that way;" "They be red or black;" "It might be dark and that's how they showing it;" "This is what I'm saying, like instead of having red ants and black ants, instead they have purple ants to bring out the um picture;" "To show that it's nighttime;" "It's night;" "And you can look at the picture, the moon's out, and it's dark in the background"). Further, there were instances of the students regulating each other's attention (e.g., "Look at the picture!") similar to that of my requests for the students to make meaning by comparing illustrations (i.e., "The moon? The moon up in the corner Tin's pointing to? That's it? Okay. Anything different from this picture to this one?"). At this point (Table 6, pp. 5, 8) I primarily focused on story-related features, emphasizing meta-narrative, pictorial, and text information. By the middle of the book (Table 5, pp. 14, 17, 18), the students began to focus on multiple sources for information, including the illustrations, illustrations and text mixed, and their personal knowledge. For example, on page 14, the students finally concluded that the crystal the ant scout previously brought to the ant tunnel and the

crystals the ants were searching for were sugar crystals (e.g., "Oh, it's sugar. Oh, oh I see what they're doing...I see what they're doing;" "There's those crystals things;" "It's sugar;" "It's sugar, yes"). In response, I reconstructed an earlier event (i.e., "Well, I thought he had given it to the queen?") and together they negotiated meaning out of old information by recalling and reinterpreting details.

Toward the end of the book (Table 5, pp. 25, 26, 28), the students were using the three discourse functions to discuss the story. Here, they were able to assume the ants' perspective, as well as infer the forthcoming events for the two ants, by focusing on an object in the illustration (i.e., the kitchen faucet) and the attribute of "strength" associated with water pouring out of the faucet (e.g., "It's too strong;" "And down the tunnel down the tunnel;" "The water's too strong;" "Into the little sink hole thing"). I sought to clarify the information (i.e., "Oh, what you mean is the water is too forc...,") in order to facilitate the interaction.

By the very end of the story (Table 5, pp. 30, 31), the students were developing the story by contributing affective responses about the two ants (e.g., "They're tired"). At this point (Table 6, pp. 30, 31), I used pictorial information together with the text to focus

their attention (i.e., "What's happening here?"). As the discussion ended, the students were able to recognize characters (the main ant colony), as well as their motives and goals (e.g., "They probably come back and get them").

Table 5

TWO BAD ANTS: Students' Language (MU's) in a Distanced Text-to-Picture Relationship

	Function of Discourse			Patterns of Focus					Levels of Language				
page# (MU's)	Expres	Trans	Poet	Text	Pict	Text/ Pict	Pers Know	Wrld Know	Label	Desc	Inter	Infer	Eval
p. 5 (20)	.25	.65	.10	.05	.80	.00	.00	.15	.45	.50	.05	.00	.00
p. 8 (21)	.14	.81	.05	.00	.52	.14	.29	.05	.33	.57	.10	.00	.00
p.11 (12)	.00	.33	.67	.00	.50	.42	.08	.00	.50	.16	.34	.00	.00
p.14 (44)	.18	.27	.55	.05	.30	.36	.18	.11	.41	.43	.09	.07	.00
p.17 (15)	.20	.53	.27	.13	.33	.54	.00	.00	.60	.20	.13	.07	.00
p.19 (12)	.33	.50	.17	.08	.08	.08	.76	.00	.67	.17	.08	.08	.00
p.25 (6)	.17	.66	.17	.00	.17	.33	.50	.00	.50	.17	.17	.16	.00
p.26 (9)	.22	.33	.45	.00	.22	.22	.56	.00	.56	.22	.22	.00	.00
p.28 (28)	.35	.35	.30	.07	.28	.14	.51	.00	.43	.36	.07	.07	.07

Table 5 (continued)

page# (MU's)	Functions of Discourse			Patterns of Focus					Levels of Language				
	Expres	Trans	Poet	Text	Pict	Text/ Pict	Pers Know	Wrld Know	Label	Desc	Inter	Infer	Eval
p.30 (7)	.29	.58	.13	.00	.13	.58	.29	.00	.29	.14	.14	.14	.00
p.31 (3)	.67	.33	.00	.00	.00	.00	.67	.33	.67	.33	.00	.00	.00

Note. Expres=expressive; trans=transactional; poet=poetic.

Text=text; pict=picture; text/pict=text and picture; pers know=personal knowledge; world know=world knowledge.

Label=label; desc=description; inter=interpretation; infer=inference; eval=evaluation.

Table 6

TWO BAD ANTS: Teacher's Instructional Cues (MU's) in a Distanced Text-to-Picture Relationship

page# (MU's)	Focus of Talk		Types of Information					Strategies				
	Story	Stry-R	TxtE	PictE	Infer	PersA	Meta	Elct	Infrm	Clarf	Focus	Cont
p. 5 (24)	.25	.75	.17	.13	.25	.00	.45	.42	.16	.21	.21	.00
p. 8 (18)	.05	.95	.11	.39	.17	.00	.33	.44	.06	.28	.16	.06
p.11 (12)	.25	.75	.33	.33	.00	.00	.34	.17	.17	.33	.33	.00
p.14 (12)	.75	.25	.17	.08	.50	.08	.17	.33	.25	.25	.17	.00
p.17 (8)	.62	.38	.00	.25	.38	.12	.25	.50	.25	.25	.00	.00
p.19 (2)	.50	.50	.00	.00	1.00	.00	.00	.50	.50	.00	.00	.00
p.25 (8)	.38	.62	.00	.00	.25	.12	.63	.12	.38	.38	.12	.00
p.26 (3)	.67	.33	.00	.00	.33	.00	.67	.00	.33	.33	.34	.00
p.28 (11)	.55	.45	.00	.18	.36	.00	.46	.36	.09	.28	.09	.18

Table 6 (continued)

page# (MU's)	Focus of Talk		Types of Information					Strategies				
	Story	Stry-R	TxtE	PictE	Infer	PersA	Meta	Elct	Infrm	Clarf	Focus	Cont
p.30 (3)	.33	.67	.00	1.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
p.31 (2)	.50	.50	.00	.50	.00	.00	.50	.00	.50	.50	.00	.00

Note. Story=story features; stry-r=story-related features.

Txte=text explicit; picte=pictorially explicit; infer=inference; persa=personal association; meta=meta narrative.

Elct=elicit; infrm=inform; clarf=clarify; focus=focus; cont=control.

Patterns of Meaning-Making and Mediation

After reviewing **Two Bad Ants**, several patterns emerged. The first pattern revealed that the three types of text-to-illustration relationships, originally thought to be important in the storybook reading, had little influence on the students' meaning-making or my mediation. Rather, the occurrence of the page within the story (i.e., beginning, middle, end) proved more important to both the students and me.

The second pattern revealed that the students' meaning-making and language had some common elements throughout the story, as well as within different sections (e.g., the middle) of the story. Throughout the book, the students focused on the illustrations, as well as on personal knowledge, to construct meaning and expressed this construction by labelling and describing. In addition, they primarily used transactional discourse to regulate information about story features (e.g., labelling), particularly agents' traits or actions.

While the beginning of the book revealed no new elements, the middle and end showed some changes. In the middle of the book, the students also began to focus on both the text and the picture as sources of information and to discuss the story at an inferential level of meaning. In addition, they used poetic discourse that

advanced their story development. However, at the end of the book, the students returned to focusing on the picture and personal knowledge, but shifted to using expressive discourse to articulate their personal reactions.

The third pattern revealed that I used common instructional cues throughout the book, as well as within different sections of the book. Throughout the book, I primarily focused on story-related features, rather than on story features. In addition, I used eliciting and clarifying strategies throughout the reading, although the type of information presented or sought from the students (e.g., meta-narrative, personal association) varied from the beginning to the end.

While the beginning of the book also contained these elements, the middle and end revealed some changes. In the middle of the book, I focused on story features and sought inferential information from the students. However, at the very end of the book, I returned to my focus on story-related features and adopted a controlling strategy.

Two Islands

Intrinsic Findings

The second analysis was conducted on the interactive reading of **Two Islands**. This book was read one week following the reading of **Two Bad Ants** and was more complex

in all dimensions of the pentad, as revealed by the analysis of the intrinsic narrative that follows.

Act

The act, or the plot of this story, consists of an interactive plotline, where events build upon each other in a cumulative manner until a highpoint is reached and a resolution is required. Each episode is interactive and reciprocal, so that elements from one episode serve as initiating events or problems for the following episodes. In this book, one agricultural and one industrialized island develop simultaneously but independently, each with its own social, economic, and cultural values and behaviors. The industrialized island eventually uses all of its land and resources, and begins to view the agricultural island as a source of further expansion and trade. Its intent to build a bridge between them is met with opposition, which in turn leads to the buildup of arms and aggressive acts on the part of the industrialized island. This constituted the highpoint of the narrative, which required a resolution (i.e., the heaviness of the industrialized island equipped with arms caused it to sink), and an evaluation (i.e., we should never forget the consequences of greed and carelessness towards the environment).

Agents

The agents, or characters of this story, are largely abstract, comprised of societies of industrialized versus agricultural people rather than individuals. The groups are clearly distinct in their values, behaviors, and lifestyle. Within these groups, subgroups occasionally form, such as some of the people on the industrialized island who believed the proposed bridge was morally wrong versus those who believed it was astute from an economic and recreational perspective. The only characters identified as individuals were the two leaders of the islands, including the boss of the industrialized island named Gordon D. Warden. Considerable change and development is observed in his characterization across time, from an initial perception of a positive leader who solved problems quickly and effectively, to a later perception of a bully who would use any means to accomplish his own vision of progress. The president of the agricultural island is a less developed character who is important primarily in only one episode of the story, where Gordon D. Warden presents the plan for the bridge which the president rejects.

Scene

The plot of the story takes place in two settings across a relatively long time period of many years. At

the beginning of the story flashback is used to establish the original status of both islands, which are described as being nearly identical in location, appearance, and topography. Over time the settings of the two islands change, one becoming progressively more polluted and industrialized, while the other remains pristine and agricultural. The attitudes maintained by the two developing societies also are contrasted, with the industrialized island portrayed as projecting a progressive, technological, and superior attitude toward the pastoral island which they considered to be backward. Thus, understanding the setting of this story required the ability to coordinate a variety of facts about each island, to contrast the facts between the islands, embed the information within the present and past time frames by recognizing the function of flashback and changing time frames, and to recognize attitudes implied from description of the societies, alternatingly by taking first the perspective of the pastoral island, and then the contrasting perspective of the industrialized island.

Purpose

The goals within this story are cultural or societal goals, and the actions are collective efforts to reach those goals. Most of the goals are established by the industrialized island, at first focusing upon the overall

goal of growth and development, with related specific goals including working hard to keep up with the rest of the world, building ships, factories and highways, finding a leader to coordinate further growth and development, and making the island the most famous in the world. Later the overriding goal changed to that of providing the workers with a location where they could enjoy clean air, beaches and open spaces. This objective results in the specific goal of convincing the president of the agricultural island to build a bridge. When this fails, a new goal is formulated, to build the bridge without the agricultural island's endorsement and to simultaneously collect arms to enforce the bridge building. Each of these goals evolves from the consequences of either attaining or failing to attain the objectives established by previous goals, so that the goals are interactive and reciprocal.

Agency

The agency is the medium, or narrative discourse, that is presented through both text and illustration. The author/illustrator's internal story agency is the bridge. As the controlling agent, the author/illustrator represents his internal goals, and those of his agents, through the planning and building of the bridge. As in **Two Bad Ants**, agency was examined according to the three text-to-illustration relationship types. Analysis revealed

that only four pages maintained a Close Relationship (e.g., the illustration depicts two land masses on either side of the picture surrounded by water, one with green hills and the other with gray buildings and smokestacks; the text correspondingly refers to two islands, situated in the ocean near one another). These included the first two-page spread and three two-page spreads at the end of the story.

The remaining 10 combination pages held a Text-to-Picture Relationship (e.g., the illustration depicts an old-fashioned farming community with cottages, cows grazing in the fields, and villagers; the text details the history of the island community, and the goals of the islands inhabitants for the future). These relationships occurred throughout the beginning and middle of the book. No pages in this book maintained a Picture-to-Text Relationship.

Extrinsic Findings

The interactive event took place within the classroom community three-hour block. A school bell rang three minutes into the reading event signalling all students should be in their appropriate class. The ringing bell may have affected the students' responses and the teacher's questioning strategies at the beginning of the story.

The process of reconstructing the narrative as it occurred within the interactive reading event reflected an integration of the act, agents, scene, purpose, and agency, and thus the analysis reported below maintains this integration in order to best capture the dynamic interactions among them. In order to examine the participants' response to the illustrations, the text, and the interaction between them, the analysis is organized according to pages that maintain a Close Relationship versus those that hold a Text-to-Picture Relationship.

Close Relationship

The analysis of the four two-page spreads generally revealed that, other than in the beginning of the story, the students relied primarily on the illustrations, with limited dependence on the text, and their own personal or world knowledge to construct the narrative. In addition, they focused on other types of information or elements that were not related to the story or to the story reading (Table 7). Further analysis revealed that my mediation focus was on story-related, rather than on story, features, as evidenced by the high percentages found for meta-narrative information delivered (Table 8).

At the beginning of the story (Table 7, pp. 1-2), the students primarily focused their attention on items that were perceptually salient in the illustrations. Their

semantic level of meaning was directed at explicit labelling (e.g., "It's an island") or describing (e.g.,"It goes up in the air") these items, without specifying any relationship among them. Attempts by me to increase the participants' semantic levels of language through teacher questioning (e.g., "Can you tell me what's happening in these two pictures?") did not result in a higher level of interpretation; rather, they responded to my question with a series of facts about each island (e.g., "A tornado;" "Here go a big old rock with bricks on it").

In addition, the students tended to use their personal knowledge to interpret the story. For example, in responding to discussion about smoke depicted in the illustration, the students labelled and described the smoke (e.g., "That's not smoke, that's clouds") according to their own experiences. My mediation attempts at this point (Table 8, pp. 1-2) were directed to story-related features (i.e., "What do you think is happening, if the smoke is coming out here?"). In addition, I mediated and encouraged the students' use of the text through meta-narrative information (i.e., "Look at the illustrations, okay") that directed their attention to a meaning-making source and a narrative construction procedure.

By the end of the story (Table 7, pp. 23-28), the students' focus was primarily on non-story behaviors as

reflected through expressive language (e.g., "I'm tired. How many more pages we have?" "This the last page?"). Their level of language was categorized as other as a result of these behaviors. The few remarks about the story reflected their concern regarding confusion about the setting, particularly which island was being depicted (e.g., "Other people down here look like they gray...and up here it looks like it belong to the Greenel"). In addition, their descriptions were limited to the most perceptually salient features, such as the colors and objects on Graynel (e.g., "It's dark gray"). My mediation attempts at this point (Table 8, pp. 23-28) were focused on story-related features (e.g., "What would you put on the sign if you could have...?") through a combination of strategies, including a form of control.

Table 7

TWO ISLANDS: Students' Language (MU's) in a Close Text-Picture Relationship

	Functions of Discourse			Patterns of Focus						Levels of Language					
page# (MU's)	Expres	Trans	Poet	Text	Pict	Text/ Pict	Pers Know	Wrld Know	Oth	Label	Desc	Inter	Infer	Eval	Oth
1-2 (17)	.53	.41	.06	.06	.47	.06	.29	.12	.00	.59	.29	.12	.00	.00	.00
23-24 (13)	.69	.31	.00	.00	.30	.00	.00	.00	.70	.15	.15	.00	.00	.00	.70
25-26 (48)	.48	.33	.19	.02	.19	.17	.10	.06	.46	.04	.17	.29	.00	.04	.46
27-28 (47)	.45	.30	.25	.00	.11	.28	.06	.02	.53	.00	.17	.30	.00	.00	.53

Note. Expres=expressive; trans=transactional; poet=poetic.

Text=text; pict=picture; text/pic=text and picture; pers know=personal knowledge; wrld know=world knowledge; oth=other.

Label=label; desc=description; inter=interpretation; infer=inference; eval=evaluation; oth=other.

Table 8

TWO ISLANDS: Teacher's Instructional Cues (MU's) in a Close Text-Picture Relationship

	Focus of Talk		Types of Information					Strategies				
page# (MU's)	Story	Stry-R	TxtE	PictE	Infer	PersA	Meta	Elct	Infrm	Clarf	Focus	Cont
1-2 (42)	.12	.88	.07	.14	.12	.00	.67	.21	.12	.36	.12	.19
23-24 (23)	.35	.65	.04	.13	.18	.13	.52	.17	.30	.22	.17	.14
25-26 (22)	.14	.86	.00	.00	.23	.14	.63	.23	.29	.29	.14	.05
27-28 (28)	.14	.86	.00	.11	.18	.18	.53	.29	.25	.28	.00	.18

Note. Story=story features; stry-r=story-related features.

Txte=text explicit; picte=pictorially explicit; infer=inference; persa=personal association; meta=meta narrative.

Elct=elicit; infrm=inform; clarf=clarify; focus=focus; cont=control.

Text-to-Picture Distanced Relationship

The analysis of the 10 two-page spreads revealed approximately half occurring in the beginning of the book and half occurring in the middle to end of the book. Overall, the students' responses demonstrated patterns according to these occurrences: (a) at the beginning, they focused their attention on the illustrations, while (b) by the middle to the end of the book, they focused on other behaviors (Table 9), as reflected in the Close Relationship discussion above. The teacher focused on story-related, rather than story, features, with some attention to the illustrations and meta-narrative information (Table 10).

At the beginning of the story (Table 9, pp. 3-8), the students primarily focused their attention on items in the illustrations. Their semantic level of meaning used was labelling and describing (e.g., "That's Graynel!" "Can't you tell all that gray...") these items. My questioning attempted to reveal implicit understanding and thereby increase the semantic levels of language (Table 10, pp. 3-8) (i.e., "What kind of life do you think these people lived?") did not result in a higher level of interpretation. For example, the students responded with only the most concrete contributions of explicit information (e.g., "Dinosaur lands;" "That girl said

dinosaur"). Throughout the reading, the students' comments were either expressive or transactional discourse, usually aimed at regulating explicit information or regulating each other's behavior. At this point (Table 10, pp. 3-8) I continued my story-related focus, choosing to rely primarily on eliciting and clarifying strategies to facilitate the students' understanding of both explicit and implicit information.

From the middle to the end of the book (Table 9, pp. 11-20), the students' non-story related comments increased in number, particularly as the story progressed, and the dependence upon text to inform the illustration was uninterrupted by pages with more visual (Close or Picture-to-Text Relationships) information. For example, when the students examined the illustration on a page in the middle of the book, they could only express their emotional and aesthetic interest through labels and descriptions (i.e., "Yea, Greenel!;" "It's about time;" "Greenel got more colors then Graynel;" or "It brings out the picture"). These comments regarding the scene prevailed and overrode story development in the other areas of the pentad (i.e., act, agents, purpose).

When the text for these pages was read, the students attempted to decode single words (e.g., "Businaries" for businessmen), shadow read the text (e.g., "Came to

Greenel;" or "Had everything they needed"), and fixate on the last words of the text read (e.g., "They didn't have no car;" "They have a train"). By choosing to attend to these textual clues, they ignored other textual clues delineating increasing disparity between the two islands, (e.g., Graynel: "industrialization;" Greenel: "the clear air, the green hills, and the tidy little farms and towns"). The students developed a contrast in lifestyles between the two islands, but they did not generate the actions or motives of the Graynel people in the storyline.

My focus (Table 10, pp. 11-20), almost exclusively until the end of the story, can be characterized by my attention to story-related features and emphasis on the story reading process. However, by the end (Table 10, pp. 21-22), I had refocused my talk on story features and sought pictorial and inferential information through elicitation. The reciprocal shift in students' response can be seen in their attention to the illustrations and some attempt to use text and illustration mixed to describe and interpret events they saw (Table 9, pp. 21-22).

Table 9

TWO ISLANDS: Students' Language (MU's) in a Distanced Text-to-Picture Relationship

	Functions of Discourse			Patterns of Focus						Levels of Language					
page# (MU's)	Expres	Trans	Poet	Text	Pict	Text/ Pict	Pers Know	Wrld Know	Oth	Label	Desc	Inter	Infer	Eval	Oth
3-4 (50)	.58	.34	.08	.06	.44	.10	.14	.02	.24	.48	.26	.02	.00	.00	.24
5-6 (44)	.41	.43	.16	.06	.52	.06	.06	.00	.30	.61	.09	.00	.00	.00	.30
7-8 (57)	.34	.41	.25	.12	.39	.09	.09	.11	.20	.40	.24	.16	.00	.00	.20
9-10 (63)	.64	.35	.01	.08	.44	.02	.05	.00	.41	.25	.32	.02	.00	.00	.41
11-12 (34)	.53	.29	.18	.13	.25	.03	.09	.00	.50	.32	.18	.00	.00	.00	.50
13-14 (57)	.61	.39	.00	.05	.11	.05	.02	.02	.75	.11	.07	.00	.07	.00	.75
15-16 (45)	.27	.60	.13	.11	.20	.14	.09	.04	.42	.27	.11	.11	.09	.00	.42
17-18 (58)	.60	.36	.04	.02	.26	.03	.00	.00	.69	.22	.05	.02	.02	.00	.69

Table 9 (continued)

page# (MU's)	Functions of Discourse			Patterns of Focus						Levels of Language					
	Expres	Trans	Poet	Text	Pict	Text/ Pict	Pers Know	Wrld Know	Oth	Label	Desc	Inter	Infer	Eval	Oth
19-20 (86)	.57	.35	.08	.00	.21	.08	.00	.01	.70	.09	.13	.07	.01	.00	.70
21-22 (17)	.41	.41	.18	.00	.41	.18	.00	.00	.41	.06	.35	.18	.00	.00	.41

Note. Expres=expressive; trans=transactional; poet=poetic.

Text=text; pict=picture; text/pict=text and picture; pers know=personal knowledge; wrld know=world knowledge; oth=other.

Label=label; desc=description; inter=interpretation; infer=inference; eval=evaluation; oth=other.

Table 10

TWO ISLANDS: Teacher's Instructional Cues (MU's) in a Distanced Text-to-Picture Relationship

page# (MU's)	Focus of Talk		Types of Information					Strategies				
	Story	Stry-R	TxtE	PictE	Infer	PersA	Meta	Elct	Infrm	Clarf	Focus	Cont
3-4 (27)	.04	.96	.04	.08	.08	.08	.72	.26	.15	.37	.22	.00
5-6 (19)	.42	.58	.05	.32	.37	.00	.26	.47	.05	.38	.10	.00
7-8 (33)	.24	.76	.06	.18	.21	.09	.46	.33	.06	.30	.21	.10
9-10 (19)	.11	.89	.11	.22	.16	.22	.29	.32	.21	.26	.16	.05
11-12 (22)	.14	.86	.09	.09	.18	.14	.50	.18	.00	.37	.18	.27
13-14 (22)	.09	.91	.05	.00	.18	.00	.77	.32	.18	.37	.09	.04
15-16 (21)	.14	.76	.05	.05	.19	.29	.42	.29	.29	.29	.14	.00
17-18 (22)	.18	.72	.00	.32	.09	.00	.59	.05	.40	.05	.32	.18

Table 10 (continued)

page# (MU's)	Focus of Talk		Types of Information					Strategies				
	Story	Stry-R	TxtE	PictE	Infer	PersA	Meta	Elct	Infrm	Clarf	Focus	Cont
19-20 (30)	.30	.70	.07	.37	.27	.00	.29	.27	.43	.07	.03	.20
21-22) (6)	.67	.33	.00	.33	.33	.00	.34	.50	.17	.00	.17	.16

Note. Story=story features; stry-r=story-related features.

Txte=text explicit; picte=pictorially explicit; persa=personal association; meta=meta narrative.

Elct=elicit; infrm=inform; clarf=clarify; focus=focus; cont=control.

Patterns of Meaning-Making and Mediation

After reviewing **Two Islands**, several patterns emerged. Similar to **Two Bad Ants**, the first pattern revealed that the three types of text-to-illustration relationships had little effect on the students' meaning-making and my mediation. However, in contrast to **Two Bad Ants**, the occurrence of the page within the story was not important to either the students or me.

The second pattern revealed that the students' meaning-making and language had few common elements throughout the story or within different sections. As the story unfolded, the only consistent element was the students' use of expressive and transactional discourse; patterns of focus and levels of language varied from section to section. In the beginning section, the students generally focused on the pictures and labelled salient objects, while in the middle and the end sections, the students focused on aspects not related to the story or the reading event. Only at the very end did the students redirect their attention to the story illustrations.

The third pattern revealed that I used some common instructional cues throughout the book and within sections. Throughout the book, I primarily focused on story-related features, rather than on story features. In

addition, I addressed meta-narrative and pictorial information, using a clarifying strategy. While the beginning of the book contained these elements, the middle and end sections of the book revealed an additional change; I also used a controlling strategy in response to the students' focus on <u>other</u> behaviors.

CHAPTER V

LIMITATIONS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Limitations to the Research

There are two major types of limitations to this research: (a) those that are inherent in qualitative methodology, and (b) those that are related to my particular study. Within qualitative research, there is a particular limitation regarding the role of the teacher/researcher (Stenhouse, 1985). That is, there are conflicts between the teacher's role of interacting with, motivating, and evaluating students and the researcher's role of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. In this study, I attempted to keep the positions as separate as possible by maintaining different data sources (e.g., written notes, audio- and video-tapes) for different purposes, as well as by collaborating with other researchers in analyzing and interpreting the research data (Martin, 1987; Maxwell, 1990).

In addition, there were limitations to this particular study. First, the results were based on my choice of measures and analyses to describe the extrinsic narrative events (i.e., patterns of focus, discourse functions, levels of language); different measures and/or means of analyses may have yielded other findings. For

example, a measure to determine how students conceptualize a story's moral message and its relationship to the larger classroom community. Second, the breadth and depth of data collected were limited by several factors. The 45-minute interactive reading events were part of the larger 3-hour integrated curricula block; other classroom materials and activities that would normally influence the small group events were not addressed (Golden & Gerber, 1990). Also, the reading events reported here constituted only two of the approximately 40 such events occurring throughout the year; further examination of other reading events would yield a thicker description (Geertz, 1973). Finally, time constraints precluded multiple readings of the same illustrated storybook; additional readings may have yielded increased intellectual responses through character, story and theme development (Pradl, 1987). However, my decision in this class to form many small groups for one reading versus a few larger groups for several readings was made in order to promote a social situation conducive to talk and sharing of ideas in connection with narrative text (Bloome & Green, 1982; Cochran-Smith, 1984).

Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of my study was to explore the use of illustrated literature within small group interactive

reading events with my at-risk sixth-grade students. In particular, I focused on the interaction of the language demands of the literature selections, the language actually used by my students (Norris, 1991; Norris & Hoffman, in press), and the mediation I provided as the classroom teacher (Delamont, 1983; Vygotsky, 1962). The results provide an overall picture of at-risk middle school readers' responses during initial readings of two illustrated storybooks (Britton, 1970; Golden, 1990), as well as my attempts to mediate and facilitate the on-going responses. In the following two sections, I discuss the findings for each reading event, guided by my five research questions.

Two Bad Ants

Focus on Illustrations and Text

The findings showed that my students focused on illustrations throughout the reading event, as well as on a combination of text and illustrations from the middle to near the end of the reading. First, the students tended to use the illustrations for meaning making regardless of the text-picture relationship type. They identified and interpreted location (i.e., scene), characters (i.e., agents), their purposes, and their isolated actions (i.e., acts) within the episodes. For example, they observed an illustration drawn from the ants' perspective of two ants

carrying crystals and walking away from a huge vessel bearing the letters "GAR." Based on this drawing the students recognized that the crystals were composed of sugar. Further, their interactions about this illustration reveal an interest in the ants' actions and purposes depicted in the illustration.

Liza: Oh, oh, I see what they're doing...I see what they're doing.

Ann: There's those crystals things.

Liza: They climbing up in the jar getting them crystals, that's what...

Orna: It's sugar!

Ann: It's sugar, yes!

This attention to the illustrations was not unexpected for several reasons. First, as noted in Chapter III, my students and I had been immersed in studying art (e.g., attending first hour art class) as an integral part of every theme within the literate discourse community. As a consequence, they were sensitive to different art forms, such as storybook illustrations, as viable media for meaning making.

More specifically, within the interactive reading events, I normally requested the students to observe and respond to each illustration prior to reading the text. Thus, the students had been accustomed to focusing their attention through similar prompting during the previous

book readings. Over the year, they had come to recognize illustrations as important sources of story information.

Along with the attention to illustrations, by the middle of the book my students began to attend to a combination of illustration and text. With their focus on verbal as well as visual elements, they established another meaningful source of information. For example, the primary characters of the story, the two bad ants, are originally presented as an undifferentiated part of the larger ant colony group. When the two small ants choose to leave the group and remain behind in the sugar bowl, they become protagonists defined by an act of disobedience motivated by greed. The text reads: "...There was something about this unnatural place that made the ants nervous. In fact they left in such a hurry that none of them noticed the two small ants who stayed behind" (Van Allsburg, 1988, p. 14). The illustration on the following page depicts an aerial view of two tiny ants, facing one another, atop a large quantity of crystals deep inside a sugar bowl. At this point in the story, my students demonstrated their interpretation of the sign (i.e., the two ants who remained behind were, in fact, the two bad ants) through the integration of these information sources (Blank, Rose, & Berlin, 1978; Morris, 1964; Nelson, 1985).

A possible explanation for attention to text and illustrations may be found in my students' on-going search for the two main characters who, earlier in the story, had been undefined characters. The title of the book may have influenced the students' recognition of these particular characters by their actions. In addition, they recognized that the behavior of these two ants, unlike other members of the main ant colony, earned these characters the label of "bad." The terminology was familiar to our school environment and was often used by others outside our community to identify my students. Also, possibly the change in my reading voice at this point in the text may have cued my students that these characters were forthcoming.

Focus on Language

In this story, the language of the text included concrete language and simple metaphors. For example, the illustrations represented agents (e.g., ants, human being) and objects (e.g., spoon) that were within my students' experiential background. Correspondingly, when the author/illustrator wrote "A giant silver scoop hovered above them, then plunged deep into the crystals," he was representing the object "spoon" and its appropriate action through metaphor. This event was likely within the personal background of each participant.

Similarly, the story structure included ongoing actions and states that could be interpreted on a literal level (Norris, 1991; Scholes, 1982). My students were particularly engaged in developing the story involving the two main characters and their calamitous adventures (e.g., following the two ants' tumble into the coffee cup, plunge into the garbage disposal and descent into the toaster). The students did not need a wealth of world or cultural knowledge to determine the characters' predicaments.

Several explanations may account for my students' interest in action-oriented story structure. First, adolescents at this age generally prefer quick-paced storylines in which events unfold rapidly (e.g., Cullinan, 1987; Nodelman, 1992). In addition, action was an important and familiar way of viewing and discussing events in many of the previous story selections. Further, part of the explanation also may reside in the learning community's regular use of video and film with similar action-oriented structure.

Given the social activity of interactive book reading, the students talked to me and to each other (Bloome, 1985; Loughlin & Martin, 1987; Slavin, 1980). My students' transactional and expressive discourse (Britton, 1979), paralleled Britton's role of language used to evaluate the story from a participant's stance; that is,

they reported on what was happening in a coherent order but did not relate why it was happening (e.g., "They're climbing up a wall;" "They're in a drain thing"). In contrast, the students used poetic discourse when they assumed the two ants' perspective and could identify plans and intentions for these characters. Therefore, when using the poetic function (Britton, 1979), the students told and evaluated the story from a spectator's stance (e.g., "That must have hurt").

A possible explanation for the high frequency in the use of transactional discourse lies in my students' active involvement in providing information for fellow group members. This was a customary feature of our interactive process, the give and take of our dialogue. When they started to relate to the two ants' misadventures, as reflected in their use of poetic discourse, the tone of the story reading was enthusiastic and engaging.

My Mediation

My mediation primarily took two forms: (a) encouraging talk to create a social context, and (b) facilitating meaning making through such strategies as eliciting, clarifying, and refocusing. Throughout the reading, I encouraged my students' talk as a means of expressing their thoughts. This enabled the group members' comments, reflections, and contradictions to

serve as mechanisms for refining their understanding of the story. For example, my students and I discussed the nature and identification of the crystal over several pages of text before concluding that it was actually made of sugar. Through my facilitation, I also encouraged my students' talk as a means of reflecting on and reorganizing their experience with the crystal. However, the students did not present world or cultural knowledge about items having a crystalline form (e.g., lactose, fructose). They may have advanced the storyline more quickly if I had guided them in this direction.

I used questioning strategies in an attempt to work within the students' Zone of Proximal Development. This allowed active participation but did not necessarily increase their learning in a more abstract and complex manner. My reflective field notes suggest four explanations: (a) that I was guided by the students' numerous topical comments and concerns, (b) that I presumed my students' activation of personal knowledge was appropriate and sufficient for developing a story, (c) that I assumed they were developing a story on their own, and (d) that I was preoccupied with the appearance of offering too much information so as to dominate the reading event.

Two Islands

Focus on Illustrations and Text

The findings showed that my students focused on illustrations at the beginning and at the end of the story, although they attended to non-story related aspects in the middle of the reading event. At the beginning of the story, the students attempted to use the illustrations for meaning making. For example, the students observed and commented upon a two-page illustration depicting two islands situated in a large body of water. The interaction focused on information regarding geographical identity, individual island names, actions on the islands, past circumstances, and lifestyles.

Several explanations can be offered for the students' interactions generated by this illustration. First, they were cued by the title of this selection; as Evita stated, "Because right there from...that's the title of the book." In addition, as in previous readings they studied illustrations for clues to understanding a story. For example, they normally sought to establish a setting for the story they were reading.

However, by the middle of the story, the students' attention was directed at non-story related aspects of the illustrations, such as the colors used in the pictures or a specific element within a picture with little regard to

what it suggested about the events on the islands. Their behaviors suggested that they were having difficulty understanding the story, and thus resorted to talking about what could be seen or described in the illustration, rather than interpreting what the picture represented within the plot.

One reason for this focus on non-story related aspects of the illustrations was related to the difficulty in perceiving action across the middle pages of the book. The drawings were highly stylized and focused on scenes, rather than characters and their actions. The scenes were arranged in alternating form, with one illustration and accompanying text depicting Graynel followed by a contrasting picture and text for Greenel. The purpose of the sequences of illustrations was to show that Graynel was becoming progressively more industrialized and polluted, while Greenel remained pristine.

However, I surmise that it appeared to be difficult for the students to continuously follow these illustrations where there is little action on the part of story characters to provide the accustomed type of continuity between scenes and ideas. Consequently, in many places they discussed each picture as an isolated snapshot of a particular island, without recognizing the transformations that were depicted across illustrations.

For example, they didn't notice the increasing industrialization and crowdedness across the sequence of pictures depicting Graynel. Without this understanding, they had no interpretation for the cement blocks that were brought to the island to build a bridge, and simply commented that a boat was bringing blocks and then moved on to a different part of the illustration.

The difficulty understanding the events on Graynel or deriving cues from illustrations caused them to lose interest in discussing those pictures. For example, after discussing a two-page spread of Graynel depicting a drab, busy city with undefined human figures, the students stated that they did not want to look at any more pictures of that island, calling it "boring." They were more interested in viewing the illustrations of Greenel, but even then their comments focused on the color or beauty of the island, with only a few comments related to any contrast with Graynel (e.g., "It doesn't have cars," and "It's healthy"). Thus, the depiction of scenes representing completed action rather than ongoing action provided the students with minimal cues that could be used to interpret the text.

When these action cues were present, the responses provided by the students were remarkably different. For example, both illustration style and story style changed

to an action-oriented sequence at the very end of **Two Islands**. Almost immediately my students refocused their attention on the illustrations as they recognized clues to interpreting the action-oriented events in these final pictures. The text presented concrete descriptions of the characters and events that paralleled the illustrations. Under these conditions, the students readily made interpretations of the events, and inferred necessary background information, even recalling and placing new meaning on previous pages that had seemed uninterpretable before. The shift in artistic and linguistic style enabled them to regain control of and enthusiasm for the developing story.

Focus on Language

In this story, the language of the text included numerous metaphors, complex sentence structures, and many transformations in temporal perspective. For example, instances of all three types of complexity are found in the sentence: "The very old people could remember when Graynel had been like a lovely garden in the sea" (Gantschev, 1985, pp. 9-10). In the ensuing discussion, the students recognized that in the distant past of the two islands both had been rural and agrarian. However, they did not simultaneously consider the two islands in their present states and recognize that the old people

were actually commenting on the effects of industrialization on a society that does not practice environmental protection.

One reason for their failure to simultaneously consider two conditions involving the same island is limited experience with this level of complex temporal structure. The previously read stories did not contain time shifts requiring a facility with flashback and foreshadowing. The students were accustomed to stories with simple chronological sequence and linear transformations in time. Also, the story structure required the students to coordinate simultaneously developing parallel storylines. This type of organization was not familiar to my students, since many of the previously read books presented more straightforward plots. In addition, the story demanded alternating from one point of view to another, as well as evaluating events from multiple perspectives (i.e., each of the two islands, the author's, your own, your group's). The abstractness of the two islands as characters impeded the ability of my students to assume each islands' perspective. I surmise that my students were operating at a concrete operational level (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget, 1955) and had difficulty applying formal, logical operations required for perspective taking. Finally, the cause-effect

relationships were complex, requiring world and cultural knowledge beyond my students' abilities. For example, they did not show an awareness of the global impact of a society's decisions.

The greatest portion of the students' discourse demonstrated their reliance on regulating information on isolated topics. Their ideas represented lists of facts associated with each island. Moreover, the students had difficulty establishing temporal, causal or conditional relationships (Blank, Rose, & Berlin, 1978). Furthermore, when the illustrations and/or the text required the students to coordinate multiple events, they resorted to the use of controlling language (e.g., "Girl, shut up!", "Quit kicking me").

My Mediation

My mediation primarily took three forms: (a) encouraging talk to create a social context, (b) facilitating meaning making through such strategies as eliciting, clarifying and refocusing, and (c) maintaining the event through a controlling language. Similar to the reading of **Two Bad Ants**, I encouraged my students to express their thoughts about illustrations and text. Unlike the first story reading where the students were actively engaged in talking to each other about the story, I often had to solicit students to participate.

While I believed I was mediating the group discussion about the story, I actually focused on ideas that were story-related and provided only tangential information (Martinez & Teale, 1989). For example, the author/illustrator chooses to represent the second island as a grossly overindustrialized metropolis where most of the land is dedicated to skyscrapers, factories and roadways.

Ann: That's Graynel!

Carlene: That's um Gra Graynel...

Liza: Graynel. Can't you tell all that gray.

Teacher: All the buildings.

Carlene: What kind of building this is, Teacher? They got a building called AID.

Ann: There's a bar!

Teacher: A skyscraper.

Orna: A bank.

As can be seen in this interaction, I chose to comment on those things consistent with elements of the picture that were story-related. However, these comments did not serve to focus the students' attention on the actions or events related to the plot, or to extend their ideas beyond recognizing the objects in the illustration.

I used questioning strategies in an attempt to work within the students' Zone of Proximal Development. However, the students did not choose to respond when many

of the questions were first proposed. Consequently, I often rephrased the questions which did allow for active participation. The following transcript excerpt represents my interaction with the students which occurred after reading the text that accompanied the illustration described above.

Teacher: What kind of life do you think these people lived?

Carlene: You see more cars in this one than in Greenland. *{Turning back to illustration of first island}* You don't hardly see no people. *{Returning to present pages illustrating second island}* You see a lot of people right here.

Teacher: So what kind of life do you think this is here?

Carlene: A car land.

Ann: A a boring!

Teacher: Why boring?

Tin: It's all water.

Liza: Like New Orleans. It's cars all over.

Ann: It's all gray.

Several explanations may account for the students' initial unresponsiveness to my mediation: (a) the question presented an abrupt topic shift, (b) the question was too abstract and required the students retrieve a network of scientific, social and cultural knowledge, (c) the question's past tense signalled an inappropriate time shift, and (d) the students did not choose to answer.

Finally, my facilitation throughout the middle of the story reading was distinguished by my use of controlling language to regulate the students' behavior. The students' inattention to aspects of the book and the reading event necessitated my use of this language strategy. For example, Orna put her head down on the table and I asked her to "bring your head up." As I began to read a portion of text, she lifted her head. As illustrated in the following excerpt, it was Liza's expression of sympathy with Orna's fatigue that prompted my request to redirect their attention to the story.

Liza: Just like you watch television and you go to sleep.

Teacher: Can I have everyone tune in to the book?

At least three explanations might account for the students' disengagement during the middle of the reading: (a) the language demands of the text were too complex, (b) my mediation attempts were at too abstract (e.g., "What kind of life do you think these people lived?"), and (c) my facilitative comments were at too low a level within the students' Zone of Proximal Development (e.g., "All the buildings").

Role Conflict: Teacher as Researcher

In spite of my lengthy research preparations, when the reading events were in progress the conflict between my role as teacher and my role as researcher became almost

tangible. My written notes indicate my recollections of the reading events to have been punctuated by moments of anxiety associated with the process of data collection. During both reading events I wanted my students to demonstrate their knowledge of and interest in the social nature of interactive reading using illustrated literature. However, my notes reveal these two conflicts: (a) that I changed my teaching style during the two reading events by suppressing my usual active communicative intervention strategies used to mediate my students' story understandings, (b) that I was more interested in focusing on and developing the students' affective responses to the illustrations instead of a balance between intellectual and affective responses.

Pedagogical Implications

My study points out that during two 45-minute interactive readings, these six at-risk learners developed an illustrated story by varying their focus on information sources. First, their attention to illustrations, text, and a combination of illustration and text fluctuates within a wide range. Second, these students demonstrate an interest in drawing upon personal knowledge to interpret a story. Third, they reveal limited ability to retrieve world and cultural knowledge and limited

acknowledgment that background knowledge could be a source of information for their story development.

As teachers, we should be aware of what sources of information are the focus of our students' attention and thus influence their story development. Additionally, we should be cognizant of the sources they exclude from their focus as they reconstruct a story, particularly an illustrated story. Becoming aware of how students talk about stories can be effectively achieved within the small-group interactive reading event.

By its nature a small group is likely to become socially interactive through discourse. The social discourse can be constructively directed toward developing a narrative. To begin with, during the reading event the students have opportunities to share and to mediate one another in their developing story. Further, the teacher has the opportunity to facilitate and mediate the students' construction of new understandings from the developing story (Vygotsky, 1962). Moreover, the teacher has the opportunity to explore the students' needs for additional world/cultural knowledge required to understand the story. Also, the teacher has the opportunity to become aware of how to assist the students in future readings of the same selection. Finally, the teacher has the opportunity to develop curriculum based on students'

actual social, cognitive and linguistic needs and mediate further knowledge construction outside the reading event. Therefore, interactive reading events using illustrated literature might be the impetus refining students' concept of narrative in addition to refining students' literate discourse as both teacher and students build a literate discourse community.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research is needed on the development of literate discourse communities, including interactive book readings, and their complex intersecting components. Based on naturalistic inquiry methods, additional research should examine the rereadings in relation to the influence of the wide range of materials and activities present in the 3-hour integrated curriculum block. Research is needed to examine how students construct/reconstruct a single selection over time, observing their discourse through multiple readings. Students' discourse during repeated readings of the illustrated text should be examined to detect: (a) how language evolves, (b) gender-related issues, (c) to what extent attention to illustrations and text changes, (d) to what extent teachers' questioning strategies and comments change, and (e) to what extent personal/world/cultural knowledge develops and influences story construction/reconstruction.

Researchers must use other ways of measuring and analyzing data from interactive reading events. For example, researchers should look at story content in relation to gender-related issues and/or racial/ethnic issues. Additionally, researchers must look at small-group composition and its relation to gender and race/ethnic background. Finally, researchers must look for methods to resolve the conflict between teacher role and researcher role when the teacher is the researcher in her learning environment.

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VITAE

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DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

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Major Field: Education

Title of Dissertation: A Sixth-Grade Literate Discourse Community: Making Social Meaning with Illustrated Literature during Interactive Reading Events

Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Date of Examination:

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